JOHN BANNISTER TABB

THE PRIEST-POET

Faithfully yours in Christ,
John B. Jabb.

John Bannister Tabb

The Priest-Poet

By M. S. PINE
Author of ALMA MATER, AND
OTHER DRAMAS

"They toil not, neither do they spin"—
The blossom-Thoughts that here within
The garden of my soul arise.
Immortelles

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To

Saint Joseph, the Spouse of Mary

Beloved of Heaven and Earth

This Little Garden of Father Tabb's Poesy

Is Gratefully and Lovingly

Dedicated

FOREWORD

A miniature painted in France in 1578 by the artist Hilliard bears the inscription: "If one could but paint his mind!" Happier than the artist, the lyric singer can paint his soul in his poems, and our Priest-Poet has painted his in most exquisite miniature, so that the world is better for the gift.

In this little volume I have been content, in the main, to put forth the delicate work of his poetic brush, as my readers will agree. Indeed, I have more than once accused myself of presumption in undertaking to comment upon the rare creations of one so far above me as the Reverend John Bannister Tabb. But admiration for the poet and respect for his memory, combined with my desire to make him known and loved, especially by the young, have urged me to so unequal a task.

I may add that these chapters are founded upon a lecture I gave to the young ladies of a certain convent in 1907, chiefly upon the poems, for my knowledge of Father Tabb's biography was then even more meager than it will appear to those who peruse these pages. Last year, 1914, I was asked by Mr. Charles Phillips, A.M., the poet and journalist, to enlarge the lecture for "The Monitor," of San Francisco;

and since the appearance of the little serial, friends, readers, and teachers of repute have prevailed upon me to put it into permanent form. I comfort myself with the hope that ere long others will take up the task, too long neglected—for six suns have gone their round since our poet took his flight to a higher land—and with more easy means of research than Providence has placed in my power, will set before the admirers of the Poet of the Quatrain a worthy portrait of the man and a worthy estimate of his poetry and its influence.

I take pleasure in acknowledging my great indebtedness to the Reverend M. F. Dinneen, D.D., the able, learned and kindly president of St. Charles College, for help and encouragement in my pleasant labors; to the Reverend D. A. Connor for a copy of his eulogy pronounced over the remains of Father Tabb, and to Mgr. T. S. Duggan and Mr. Francis A. Litz, A.M., for valued aids toward the biography of the poet.

In conclusion, I would ask my kind readers to seek in the last chapter an urgent motive for the present publication, which is to be devoted to the attainment of the object there explained.

M. S. Pine.

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CHAPTER I

BIRTH AND BOYHOOD

Poetry is the fragrance of the flower of beauty. Who can analyze fragrance, define it, describe it? It seems like a spiritual essence, so subtle and elusive in its sweetness, so exquisitely penetrating, often so delicious and soothing in its effects. Now if beauty be the flower of God's creation and poesy its perfume, I think of all our modern poets none has entered more deeply into league with that divine beauty—none has stolen from its heart sweeter perfume to scatter in little phials of verse all over the world than John Bannister Tabb,—Father Tabb, to use the name dearer to our hearts, which designates the Catholic priest and poet of whom we are so justly proud.

Father Tabb's "Lyrics" breathe the music of Ariel and exercise just as magical an influence over the thought and fancy; he discerns spiritual truth, indeed is ever seeking it hidden under the lovely forms and types of nature, and he outpours his findings in a wealth of analogy which becomes a perennial treasure of moral musing

and lofty aspiration to the thoughtful mind,—one imbued, perhaps I must add, with a love of poetry and the subtle spiritual sense often found even in the heart of a child.

Father Tabb's boyhood, I think, must have been spent with nature and with his own thoughts—beautiful hidden dreams and longings which no one, perhaps, not even his mother suspected. A strong, tender, beautiful, womanly character that mother was, an honor to the sunny Southland which has given to our country such noble types of womanhood. The poet's second volume of "Lyrics" is dedicated:

TO THE MEMORY OF MY MOTHER

The Cowslip

It brings my mother back to me,
Thy frail, familiar form to see,
  Which was her homely joy;
And strange that one so weak as thou
Shouldst lift the veil that sunders now
  The mother and the boy.

And still more he glorifies that mother by inference in the poem,

WOMAN

Shall she come down and on our level stand?
  Nay, God forbid it! May a mother's eyes—
Love's earliest home, the heaven of Babyland,
  Forever bend above us as we rise!

All the man is there—he goes beyond the enchanted woods of chivalry, where the knight

bowed down to womanhood, back to the heaven of babyland and mother love.

A scion of one of the oldest and wealthiest families of Virginia, whose members proudly claimed alliance with the descendants of George Washington and John Randolph, the future poet and priest, John Bannister Tabb, was born at The Forest, the family estate at Mattoax, near Richmond, Va., on March 22, 1845. His father was Thomas Yelverton Tabb and his mother Marianna Bertrand Archer, from whose union sprang four children, of whom our poet was the third. With a family inheritance of more than a dozen broad and fertile plantations, and surrounded by a multitude of slaves, the boy grew up in an atmosphere of luxury. From his sixth year he had his own servants, one of whom, at that age of toy soldiers, he liberally offered to a tin peddler in exchange for a coveted piece of his shining ware.

Surrounded by all the gracious home influences, he used to boast that he learned to read and write at his mother's knee, where he learned his prayers. Later, under the careful training of a private tutor, whose instructions the neighboring children were allowed to share, mind and faculties were developed, and the seeds sown of that exquisite culture which in his verses has since enchanted the world.

Reared amid the beautiful mountains of Virginia, what wonder that his heart turns back

to them in poesy? "Here nearer heaven I seem to be," he tells us. A noble sonnet, "The Mountain," no doubt commemorates the mountains of his native State:

> Thy shadow broods above me, and mine own
> Sleeps as a child beneath it. O'er my dreams
> Thou dost, as an abiding presence, pour
> Thy spirit.

And with what human tenderness and pathos "The Lonely Mountain" tells its sorrow over the loss of one little bird's voice—its strains of miraculous power,

> A breath whose faintest echo farthest heard
> A mountain stirred.

Can you not hear the heart of the poet breathing under it? I cannot divest myself of the thought that the bird is symbolic—that the "Mountain" chants a lament for a human loss, for the "one fond, familiar strain" of his own boy voice pealing out its happy salute in song to the resounding hills.

At the age of fourteen, threatened with failure of sight, he was compelled to give up his beloved books, his tutor performing the office of reading to him daily. This was the foreshadowing of the supreme affliction which came upon him in his latest years, and which called forth such pathetic effusions from his artist-pen.

His passionate love of music, however, consoled him in some measure, and during those three years of privation he devoted much time to practice on the piano.

CHAPTER II

THE BOY-SOLDIER OF THE CONFEDERACY

John Tabb was scarce more than a boy when the Civil War broke out, and honor and duty at once led him to the defense of the Confederacy. Enlisting in the navy, he served as captain's clerk on the steamer Robert E. Lee, which ran the blockade at Wilmington, N. C., twenty-one times. His first voyage to England under that captain, in 1862, was memorized later by the appealing poem,

OFF SAN SALVADOR

It lay to westward—as of old,
An emerald bar across the gold
Of sunset—whence a vision grand
First beckoned to the stranger-land.

And on our deck, uncoffined, lay
A child, whose spirit far away
The wafture of an angel hand
Late welcomed to a stranger-land.

Subsequently he accompanied Colonel Stone to England as secretary. On board was a chaplain of the Confederacy, Father Bannon, bound for Rome to enlist the sympathy of Pius IX. One day being on deck with his captain, the young secretary saw a gentleman of distinguished appearance reading. Informed by his officer that the stranger was a priest, he ap-

proached Father Bannon and, with boyish simplicity, asked: "Are you a Catholic priest?" Receiving an affirmative answer, he paused a moment and then inquired: "Was your father a priest?" "No, my boy," said the chaplain, smiling. Young Tabb, not yet satisfied, pursued his family investigation: "Will your son be a priest?" "I think not," replied Father Bannon gently. "May I see the book you are reading, sir?" And the Father laid in the hands of his gifted questioner the breviary which was afterward, when the graces of faith and vocation had been showered upon him, to become so inexpressibly dear to his heart.

One must remember the atmosphere of dense ignorance of Catholicity, surcharged with prejudice, in which the youth had been reared, to appreciate the awakening of his mind during the voyage, for he and Father Bannon had many an interview and became good friends.

Young Tabb continued to serve in the navy until June 4, 1864, when he was captured on the Siren—which had lost her anchor—off Beaufort, N. C., by the Federal ship, Keystone State. In the "Lyrics," Father Tabb personifies, in three deep and tender quatrains,

THE LOST ANCHOR

Ah, sweet it was to feel the strain,
  What time, unseen, the ship above
  Stood steadfast to the storm that strove
To rend our kindred cords atwain!

To feel, as feel the roots that grow
  In darkness, when the stately tree
  Resists the tempests, that in me
High Hope was planted far below!

But now, as when a mother's breast
  Misses the babe, my prisoned power
  Deep-yearning, heart-like, hour by hour
Unquiet aches in cankering rest.

On the following day he, with four others, was taken to Old Point Comfort, where they were court-martialed. The youth's sense of humor did not forsake him even in the face of possible death. When his judges asked his place of residence, he replied: "England, France, Scotland, Bermuda and Canada," for he had visited all during his term of service. The captives were ordered to the prison at Point Lookout, known as the Bull Pen. Tabb, with characteristic generosity, shared fifty dollars he had equally with them; and as they were Englishmen he labored for their release, which he obtained after two months' correspondence with the British Ambassador in Washington.

CHAPTER III

PRISON LIFE. SIDNEY LANIER

The horrors of his prison life were somewhat mitigated by his meeting with Sidney Lanier, the Southern poet, prose-writer and critic. Eight dreary months of captivity united these gifted and ardent souls forever, and each became the *alter ego* of the other. Lanier's muse did not wholly forsake him in those dark hours, though sometimes Sorrow palsied it; and then the music of his flute brought solace and cheer to the two great-hearted victims of "The Lost Cause." Father Tabb's second book of "Lyrics" has immortalized

LANIER'S FLUTE

When palsied at the pool of Thought
  The Poet's words were found,
Thy voice the healing Angel brought
  To touch them into sound.

Those months of youth spent in durance vile, during which he "supped full with horrors," remained ever burned upon heart and memory. His vivid description of those horrors still haunts the remembrance of many a student of St. Charles College, with the faculty of which he was so intimately associated for more than thirty years.

Toward the close of his professorial term of 1899-1900, after a rather brief acquaintance by letter, I had the temerity to suggest that he should "go North" for the benefit of his health and his literary work. Here is the answer that came to me from Mattoax, Amelia County, Virginia, on a hot July day: "I am amused at the plan you propose. In the first place, to go to the 'brain-cooling North' is the last of desires, for I am a *Rebel unredeemed and unredeemable,* and should not feel at home there. Secondly, had I the wish, the means are lacking."

And in November, 1911, accompanying a caricature with a doggerel verse attached, founded upon a White House incident which had affronted his Southern blood, there was the following note: "I am sending you a letter from Mrs. Meynell and with it the sketch she refers to. Keep *both* if you choose. Some of your girls will, I know, see the picture as does the 'irredeemable Rebel' that drew it. Your friend, John B. Tabb.—Eight months' confinement in a Northern prison makes me ever what I am!"

But this dark memory never threw its shadow over his poetic inspirations. I have sought, and sought in vain, for one line that breathes of those troublous years of the Civil War. A marvelous reticence, indeed, which attests that the supernatural had swallowed up the natural as soon as he stepped with his Muse over the

border line of his divine Poesy. And his own words to me were: "I can do nothing in verse that is not directly *imparted* to me." The voice of his Muse was to him a divine voice.

CHAPTER IV

RELEASE FROM CAPTIVITY. ENGAGES AS TEACHER. ALFRED A. CURTIS

It was a clear day in February, 1865, when at last John Bannister Tabb and Sidney Lanier stepped forth freemen again into God's sunshine. "I felt that I was in the kingdom of heaven," said the young scion of aristocracy as he went out into a new world of poverty and wrecked hopes, youth's dauntless energies still ruling the frail, broken body.

A means of self-support must be found; and he turned with enthusiasm to his favorite art, music, determined to devote his life to its pursuit. For a year and a half he gave seven hours or more daily to piano practice. But his patron's fortune suddenly collapsed, and with it the young musician's hopes; with a heavy heart he yielded to fate, or rather to the mysterious overshadowings of Divine Providence, and gave up all prospect of a musical career.

A position as teacher was now offered him in a school attached to Mt. Calvary Episcopal Church, Baltimore, then under the pastorate of the Rev. Alfred A. Curtis, whose face was already turned toward Rome. Mt. Calvary was "High Church," and its pastor believed in the Blessed Sacrament, "said Mass," preached de-

votion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and called himself a priest, wearing cassock and biretta. Young Tabb found in him a congenial spirit; he soon fell under his spiritual influence and regularly made his confession to him as to a trusted guide. And this influence was but deepened and strengthened when, a few years later, he obtained a more important position at Racine College, Michigan.

Yet there was a hidden voice whispering to his heart of higher things than earth can give; and deeming it a call to the ministry, ere long he resigned his position and proceeded to the Episcopal Seminary at Alexandria, Va., there to pursue a course of theological study—a course which was to be completed elsewhere, though he knew it not, and after a long period of waiting.

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends." His revered director, Rev. Mr. Curtis, after the Conference of Bishops in Boston, realized with anguish of mind that there was no longer any hope of peace or salvation for him in the Anglican Church. At the close of 1871, after a correspondence with his Bishop, which forms one of the most interesting and thrilling chapters of his "Biography," he rent the ties which bound him to Anglicanism, and, resigning his pastorate, proceeded to Europe, where he repaired at once to Oxford to consult Dr. Newman.

His course was followed with intense interest by his faithful disciple, whose longing for the truth was equally ardent, and whose admiration for the illustrious English divine,—for the wisdom, sincerity and holiness of his life, even more than for his profound works, already a familiar study to young Tabb,—led him to place a trust equally unshaken in the spiritual counsels of that great convert and guide of souls. Especially was he touched with Dr. Newman's first prescription to his seeker after truth. Placing two books in Mr. Curtis' hands, the enlightened director said: "Read these if you like, but *pray* and *pray;* nothing will help you more than humble prayer." His doubts finally removed and his soul fixed in unchangeable peace, the happy neophyte was "reconciled to the Church" by Dr. Newman and baptized in his presence on May 10, 1872.

CHAPTER V

ENTERS THE TRUE FOLD. STUDIES FOR THE PRIESTHOOD

Mr. Tabb, profoundly moved, now studied and prayed more earnestly than ever; and when Mr. Curtis, shortly after his return from Europe, entered St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, to prepare for the priesthood, there was only question of following the footsteps of his guide. Ere the year came to an end John Bannister Tabb was enlisted among the most fervent and enthusiastic lovers of the Church of God. His intense love for the faith in its purity reminds one of Father Faber: he was a Catholic "from top to toe" from the moment he entered the fold, and to serve the Church was the predominating passion of his life.

How potently is the restless struggle of the soul—of the free will held back by worldly ties — portrayed from experience in "The Promontory"!

> Not all the range of sea-born liberty
> Hath ever for one restless wave sufficed:
> So pants the heart—of all compulsion free—
> *Self-driven* to the Rock, its barrier Christ.

The sway of the new seminarian over him remained undiminished. "On the day of Father Curtis' ordination (December 19, 1874),"—a

brother Levite tells the story,—"he heard his first confession, the humble, hasteful penitent being Mr. Tabb, afterwards the noted poet-priest. Mr. Tabb, who had as a Protestant been his penitent, was now eager to claim his old Confessor's first care. 'I received so many absolutions before that did not count, I wanted one at least that did,' was his remark to the students."

The biographer of Bishop Curtis gives a further paragraph of interest in regard to their mutual relations. "They had been the closest of friends; and years after, when Father Curtis became Bishop of Wilmington, in 1886, he regularly visited his friend, often walking the five miles from the railroad station to St. Charles College. . . . Bishop Curtis was his consoling angel in the hour of his greatest trial and darkness, when threatened with the loss of sight. Together they took long walks through the country recreating each other and exchanging reminiscences, one submitting to the criticism of his friend his latest verses, while the other cheered him by his encouragement. He sent the poet kind and loving messages from his deathbed, and bequeathed to him his chalice." Bishop Curtis died July 11, 1908, only a year and four months before his friend.

Not long after Mr. Tabb's conversion, his conviction became assured that the priesthood was his vocation; despite his own opinion of his

unworthiness, his soul was well prepared for this supreme grace by his purity of life, his love and practice of prayer, and the sacrifices that had been decreed by the loving Watcher and Guide of the souls of His elect, at every step of his youthful career. In 1874 he entered St. Charles College, Ellicott City, Md., to study for the priesthood.

CHAPTER VI

PROFESSOR IN ST. CHARLES COLLEGE. "BONE RULES." WITH THE MUSES

Having completed his preparatory classical studies, for which his early education and fine courses of reading had been an excellent training-school, the aspiring student was now ready for entrance into St. Mary's Seminary to pursue those theological and Scriptural studies which were to bring him in four years to the goal of all his hopes. But just at this happy moment he met anew the shadowing angel, Sacrifice, which the Holy Spirit had sent ever before him even from childhood, to lure him from aught but the Divine Light and Will. The faculty of St. Charles, appreciating his high intellectual and literary culture and his marked qualifications as a preceptor, persuaded him to remain in the college as a teacher of English. In consequence, his ordination to the priesthood was postponed many years.

He was a fine Greek scholar and delighted in teaching that language now and again to special pupils. His admirable memory had stored away long passages of the classic Greek authors which he recited with rare ease and force. But his affections were centered on his English class; and he made the hour one of perennial pleasure

as well as profit to his pupils. Not a moment was lost. The first half-hour was devoted to grammar—recitations, explanations, and blackboard work. The poet's genius for illustration, which would have made him a pastmaster in that art, helped to hold the attention and engrave in the memory the facts he strove to impress upon his eager hearers.

In his "Bone Rules, or Skeleton of English Grammar," first published in 1897, and which he sent me later, we discern clearly his method of teaching. The dedication page reads:

INSCRIBED
To my Pupils
Active and Passive; Perfect and Imperfect;
Past, Present, and Future, by Their
Loving Father Tabb.

The brevity and clearness which mark every page, the pithy explanatory notes, the copious quotations from the masters of English literature, and even the comic procession of "Sentences to be corrected," many of them Father Tabb's own creation, render "Bone Rules" an easy and a helpful mode of studying grammar.

But I have accounted for only half of the hour consecrated to English. Students of the poet could alone tell the enchantments "of those rare half-hours spent with him in the company of the Muses." Shakespeare's plays, read and

analyzed with rare psychological and poetical insight, awakened unbounded enthusiasm in his listeners. Shelley and Keats, as well as Edgar Allen Poe, each of whom he cherished with special appreciation, were studied and their exquisite imagery and musical diction brought strikingly to notice.

Of his readings of the prose and poetry of that

> Sad spirit, swathed in brief mortality
> Of Fate and fervid fantasies the prey,

Mr. T. S. Duggan, a gifted student of the poet, writes: "We ran with him through the full gamut of 'The Bells,' from their riotous roar to the softest tintinnabulations. And even the most apathetic was forced to wipe away a tear at realizing the full sadness of the untimely taking off of that 'rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.' Toward the end of one session, the teacher went to the corner of the classroom, crouched, and began to recite 'The Skylark.' The students were transfixed. When he had finished, he was on tiptoe at the opposite corner of the room, breathless, as if eager to follow the bird in its flight. Instinctively the class broke out in applause. He modestly suppressed our enthusiasm with the remark: 'Gentlemen, did you see that Skylark soar? Did you hear him sing? If there is a single boy in this class who did not see that lark and hear him sing, I forbid him ever again to

open a book of poetry, for it would be a sheer waste of time.' Need it be said that most of those present saw the lark and heard him sing?"

Each of these three poets has been honored with more than one memorial on Father Tabb's pages. Besides the sonnet entitled "Poe," beginning with the two lines cited above, a quatrain is inscribed to

POE-CHOPIN

O'er each the soul of Beauty flung
  A shadow mingled with the breath
Of music that the Sirens sung
  Whose utterance is death.

In two rare sonnets he shows his devotion to Keats as well as in the double quatrain entitled "Keats-Sappho":

Methinks when first the Nightingale
  Was mated to thy deathless song,
That Sappho with emotion pale
  Amid the Olympian throng,
Again, as in the Lesbian grove,
  Stood listening with lips apart,
To hear in thy melodious love
  The pantings of her heart.

In the sonnet, "At Keats' Grave," he apostrophizes the dead poet:

E'en death itself deals tenderly with thee:
  For here, the livelong year, the violets bloom
  And swing their fragrant censers till the tomb
Forgets the legend of mortality.

CHAPTER VII

CHARACTERISTICS. HIS GIFT OF HUMOR

One of Robert Louis Stevenson's biographers said of him that with all his literary genius he would have been floored in a simple sum of proportion. Father Tabb had an equal abhorrence of mathematics; he even refused to admit that he could add correctly. His love of the Church and her doctrines and discipline was impressed upon his pupils with strenuous energy. He said to some members of his class one day: "If I die before my ordination, while studying theology, I want my epitaph to read:

'Sacred to the memory of John B.
Tabb, D. D.'"

The students smiled, and one ventured to say: "But you are not a Doctor of Divinity yet." "D.D. will not mean Doctor of Divinity when it is found on my tombstone," was the answer; "it will mean Died of Dogma."

This passion for the Faith in its purity gleams like a ray of sunlight through his poems. "Epiphany" is a glorious confession:

Reason, have done!
Of thee I'll none
While face to face I see the sun.

Be thine the ray
To point the way
In darkness: but behold, 'tis day!

Should Faith divine
Forbear to shine,
Again I'll place my hand in thine.

For in thy sight
To walk aright
Is prelude to the perfect Light.

Father Tabb had the faculty of genius in calling out latent talent in his students, which he fostered with generous and unremitting care. Indeed, he was ever at their service in class or out of class, for he had the overflowing heart of a father for the youths in his charge. His generosity impelled him often to little acts of kindness that boys love—some dainties out of time, a pair of skates at Christmas, a book for a birthday present. The gifts he himself received from friends were generally disposed of in this way; and of his own published works he was a liberal donor.

Yet beloved as his pupils were, he would have no scenes at parting; he had no fancy for saying good-by. Commencement Day found him slipping out of the back door and down through the woods to the Virginia Station long before they and his numerous friends were free to utter that unpleasant word in his ear.

It was characteristic of him, too, to keep in the shade during celebrations or receptions of

distinguished visitors. One day he was particularly requested to be on hand to help entertain four Bishops who were hourly expected. The smile on his face could not be misinterpreted. He was soon out of sight down in his beloved haunts in the woods, where he spent the day. As the whistle told him late in the afternoon that the honored guests had departed, he sauntered back to the college. On the way one of the faculty met him and asked: "Why didn't you stay and see the Bishops?" "I didn't want to see my forefathers (four Fathers)," was the witty rejoinder.

In the same spirit of distaste for great functions he declined an invitation of the Reverend Father (now Monsignor) Mackin, of Washington, to be present at the laying of the cornerstone of St. Paul's Church, of which he was pastor. Here are Father Tabb's "Regrets":

St. Peter is the cornerstone,
  And if you build on Paul,
  I greatly fear
  Ere many a year
Your Church is doomed to fall.
  So pray excuse
  If I refuse
To heed your invitation,
  Or have no heart
  To take a part
In such a Mackin-ation.

He possessed the gift of humor in an extraordinary degree. His jokes, repartees, and

This is the Catholic priest
Who in piety never increased.
With the world & the devil
He kept on a level,
Tho' from flesh he was wholly re-
-leased.

John B. Jabb.

comic bits of verse seemed to come from an inexhaustible source. But his wit was ruled by good nature, and was kindly toward others, though often directed unmercifully toward himself. He took delight in unearthing a tradition of the colored mammy who received him at his birth and who bore him *in puris naturalibus* through the mansion, that the entire household might see "the homeliest baby ever born in Virginia." I have no doubt that a profound spirit of humility was fostered underneath all the ridicule which he vented upon his tall spare form and prominent features.

On one occasion I had expressed my appreciation of his verses in unmeasured terms—terms which in no wise approached their merit; and shortly after, with a cordial New Year answer (1903), came a pencil sketch of the poet, to which he referred as follows: "To disabuse your notion of the 'poet,' I send you a matter-of-fact, honest presentment of the 'man' who is always, dear———, Your servant in Christ, John B. Tabb." Below the little cartoon was the slanderous verse:

> This is the Catholic priest
> Who in piety never increased.
> With the world and the devil
> He kept on a level
> Tho' from flesh he was wholly released.

I will venture to quote a bit of his humor from a friend's letter. A lady in Cairo, Egypt,

having written to Father Tabb for a copy of his poems, he answered her: "I am not surprised that you, who are sojourning in a land where the cat was once worshiped, should desire to hear the mews (Muse) of the Tabb-y."

His democratic principles are illustrated in the Cinderella rhymes styled "High and Low."

A boot and a shoe and a slipper
Lived once in the Cobbler's Row;
  But the boot and the shoe
  Would have nothing to do
With the slipper, because she was low.

But the King and the Queen and their daughter
On the Cobbler chanced to call;
  And as neither the boot
  Nor the shoe would suit,
The slipper went off to the ball.

Two unconscious lovers he celebrates with still more comic effect in

THE TRYST

Potato was deep in the dark underground,
  Tomato above in the light;
The little Tomato was ruddy and round,
  The little Potato was white.
And redder and redder she rounded above,
  And paler and paler he grew;
And neither suspected a mutual love
  Till they met in a Brunswick stew.

Here in a new aspect appears "The Woodpecker."

The wizard of the woods is he,
  For in his daily round,
Whene'er he finds a rotting tree,
  He makes the timbers sound.

Most of my readers will remember the train of events resulting so disastrously for the Church in France during Premier Combes' administration, Pius X then occupying the Papal throne. The lampoon cited below, founded upon this period, was sent me by a friend in 1905; I have never seen it in print.

THE ISSUE

In France they question now: Is Combes'
The right of teaching Faith, or Rome's?
"That Pius Fraud," thinks Combes, "shall see
That I am master here, not he."
While thinks the Pope: "Since Peter's day
All little Cocks, Combes, crow that way."

CHAPTER VIII

THEOLOGICAL STUDIES. ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

After so long and painful a postponement of his ardent aspirations for the priesthood, Mr. Tabb's professorial labors at St. Charles were intermitted and he entered the Seminary. His theological studies were completed toward the end of 1884. A spiritual Retreat followed, wholly devoted to solitude and earnest preparation for the stupendous dignity to which he was about to be elevated.

Holy Orders were conferred upon him during the Ember Week of Advent, December 20, by Archbishop Gibbons, in the Cathedral of the Assumption, Baltimore. It was in the College Chapel, at the Midnight Mass of Christmas, that he had the consoling privilege of offering the Divine Victim to His Eternal Father for the first time; and so deeply affected was he by the greatness and sacredness of the act that he would celebrate only that one Mass, although the Church allows her priests to say three on the solemn Feast of the Nativity of Christ. At the close of the Gospel he turned and addressed his audience in brief but impressive terms, referring with affectionate gratitude to the beautiful chalice he had just used, it being

a testimonial of the love and appreciation of his pupils. His heart overflowed in thanksgiving to Almighty God, who permitted him to celebrate his first Mass in the Chapel so dear to him; and he expressed an ardent desire that after a life consecrated to his beloved pupils, he might offer the Holy Sacrifice for the last time within its hallowed walls.

God heard his prayer and granted it in fullness, for from that day until the day of his death the gifted priest-poet was a part of the college. He gave to it the service of his whole being; and the angels alone could measure the height of moral, spiritual, and literary influence which he exerted not only on those who came under his gentle academic sceptre, but on hosts of friends and strangers alike by his counsels, his cultured conversation, his kindly, helpful letters—each a veritable *multum in parvo*—and by his published poems.

He added fame and distinction to the already famous institution founded by Charles Carroll of Carrollton for "the education of pious young men of the Catholic persuasion for the ministry of the Gospel," as its ancient Maryland charter states. His "Poems" and "Lyrics" were read and appreciated by an ever-widening circle of cultured admirers wherever the English language is spoken.

The assertion has been ventured that his diamonds of verse were more prized in England

than in the country that gave them birth; but for my part I would not so wrong the American mind as to believe it. Yet now that the hand which wrought such unique gems is stilled in death—and not one other to hold out such a casket for centuries, perhaps—let us not leave these priceless treasures to lie on dusty shelves. Let us love and study them and lead others to penetrate their beauty; let us hold them in reverence for their spiritual and educative power. For, indeed, all the truth that Father Tabb teaches does not lie open on the surface: often beneath his inspired words are little crypts of thought-symbol into which we must descend with our torches of love and intelligence if we would pierce the depth of the wisdom and beauty hidden there.

CHAPTER IX

FATHER TABB'S POEMS CENTER IN GOD

Father Tabb's sacred poems are gems of the sanctuary. They are peculiarly the treasures of the Church; they are stately with her majestic dogmas; tender and pathetic with her mysteries of love and joy and sorrow; glowing with her beautiful ritual and the splendor of her Feasts: her moral code, the repentance of the sinner, the mystical union of the soul with God, and, above all, the divine lessons of the Master drawn from parable and miracle and doctrine, minister in turn light and comfort to our hearts, and exquisite pleasure to our minds under these brief poetic creations, "imparted," no doubt, many of them, in the very presence of the Master.

Indeed, there is scarcely a poem which has not for us this embassy of sweetness, of uplift, of comfort; even the playful fancies in lighter vein bring a smile to the lips, but a deeper smile to the heart. And often, as we read, love and memory embalm the lines almost without effort, so enchanting is their melody, so sweet the awakened emotions of surprise, and so insistent the lesson that pierces down to the deeps of our nature. How many thousands, I wonder, can today repeat, and each time with increasing

pleasure, if not with fuller comprehension, the little Christmas verse steeped in the fragrance of Heaven,

OUT OF BOUNDS

A little Boy of heavenly birth,
  But far from home today,
Comes down to find His ball, the Earth,
  That Sin has cast away.
O comrades, let us one and all
Join in to get Him back His ball!

It is a sermon, or, rather, many mission sermons abridged in a wonderful picture. The "little Boy"—the Word eternally born in the bosom of the Father; the Earth, the ball that He holds in the hollow of His little hand; the monster Sin that has cast it away, with the whole human race, so dear to His heart! And the closing soul-cry to us all to become apostles inflamed with boundless zeal to save the souls He has come so "far from home" to redeem! But who could translate into words the deep and sublime conceptions this little verse engenders in the heart?

Father Tabb puts a maximum of meaning into a minimum of words; he cherishes structural simplicity, while the transcendent energy of his mind carries you away with a kind of momentum over gaps of thought that take away your breath, as, among scores of others, in the last couplet of "Recognition"—a happy title.

When Christ went up to Calvary
  His crown upon His head,
Each tree unto its fellow-tree
  In awful silence said:
"Behold the Gardener is He
Of Eden and Gethsemane!"

And here is a triplet, the prayer of a contemplative soul. I avow that when my eyes first lit upon it my heart almost stood still at the depth and exaltation of the thought.

GOD

I see Thee in the distant blue,
But in the violet's dell of dew
Behold, I breathe and touch Thee, too.

Do you remember how St. Gertrude, picking a flower and inhaling its fragrance, almost fell into an ecstasy of love at the thought that her Lord had created that lovely flower "to give pleasure to His little Gertrude"? Emerson says somewhere: "Nature is the incarnation of a thought. . . . Man imprisoned, man crystallized, man vegetative, speaks to man impersonated." Father Tabb, with an exquisite adaptation of the miracle recorded in St. Mark, fifth chapter, reveals his conception of God in His creation.

NATURE

It is His garment; and to them
That touch in faith the utmost hem,
He turning says again: "I see
That virtue is gone out from me."

Are not these three poems emanations of a heart which had found its center in God, whose attributes are revealed to him through the transparent medium of His glorious works? All the "Nature Lyrics"— and they superabound — chant in notes of deathless beauty the truth enunciated in the first lines of "Resurrection":

> All that springeth from the sod
> Tendeth upwards unto God.

May I say it with all reverence? As one cannot penetrate the meaning, discern all the beauty, and draw all the sweetness and divine unction from a verse of Scripture without re-reading, without tasting each word in the silent pauses of the soul, so, to my mind, much of Father Tabb's poetry will yield up its full harvest of inner meaning and outer loveliness only to the student who dedicates himself lovingly and leisurely to the enchantment of his verse.

To read the subjoined poem alone is to feel the force of my suggestion.

DEUS ABSCONDITUS

> My God has hid Himself from me
> Behind whatever else I see;
> Myself—the nearest mystery—
> As far beyond my grasp as He.
>
> And yet in darkest night, I know,
> While lives a doubt-discerning glow,
> That larger lights above it throw
> These shadows in the vale below.

CHAPTER X

HIS FIRST PUBLISHED VOLUME OF POEMS

Father Tabb's first modest volume of poems was printed privately in 1884; there is no reference to date or publisher in the copy I have. The lyrics, nineteen in number, are beautiful and refined, opening with "The Cloud," and closing with "The Rhyme of the Rock," the longest of all. These are followed by "Sonnets," several of which are republished in later volumes. There is one Sonnet on "Columbus" which is a finely drawn analogy between St. Christopher

> who on his shoulders bore,
> Across the torrent to the welcome shore,
> The Infant Christ,

and our Columbus, who was led

> westward o'er the wandering main,
> Christ-laden, to the land whereof no gleam
> Had cleft the compass of the narrower brain.

Another Sonnet whose fourteen lines conjure up in fair dreamland some of the great character-creations of tragic literature, will not prove unacceptable in full to my readers. To quote "The Arte of English Poesie,"

If Poesie be, as some have said,
A speaking picture to the eye,

then Father Tabb has nobly achieved the artist's function and superadded the grace of a third art by the musical rhythm of his numbers in

SHAKESPEARE'S MOURNERS

I saw the grave of Shakespeare in a dream,
And round about it grouped a wondrous throng,
His own majestic mourners, who belong
Forever to the Stage of Life, and seem
The rivals of reality. Supreme
Stood Hamlet, as erewhile the graves among,
Mantled in thought: and sad Ophelia sung
The same swan-dirge she chanted in the stream.
Othello, dark in destiny's eclipse,
Laid on the tomb a lily. Near him wept
Dejected Constance. Fair Cordelia's lips
Moved prayerfully the while her father slept,
And each and all, inspired of vital breath,
Kept vigil o'er the sacred spoils of death.

A good deal to my surprise, I have found no other tribute to the Bard of Avon in Father Tabb's collection of verse than an octet, full of pathos, which will fit in here, although it appears in the book of "Poems" of 1894.

YORICK'S SKULL

Poor Jester! still upon the stage,
Chap-fallen flung,
Where merry clowns from age to age
Thy dirge have sung;

Yet more than Eloquence may reach,
  Thought-heights among:
'Tis thine, humanity to teach,
  Sans brains or tongue.

A beloved name, Cardinal John Henry Newman, shines on the Dedication page of this volume not alone in the formal inscription, but in a sonnet, which breathes the deepest reverence and affection. Another tribute of the heart to His Eminence opens the sequence of "Sonnets" under date of May, 1879, the month in which the great Oratorian received the Cardinal's hat from the hand of Pope Leo XIII.

Father!—for loftier titles cannot hide
  The tenderness of thy paternity
  From eyes that turn with filial gaze to thee—
Sons of thy Faith, across the ocean wide,
Led of thy light from paths unsanctified,
  Thine own begotten, though unseen are we.
  Thy loss, thy gain, we count our own to be:
And now our hearts exulting in the tide
Of favors shed upon thee from the hand
Whose grace outgrows its giving, fondly glow
With more than silent syllables express.
O westward, as the sunshine, to our land
Still let thy love, a light perpetual, flow,
Thy children bowed in reverence to bless!

The perusal of this initiative work of our great American Lyrist would by no means suggest to the reader a coming vocation of so rare a nature as the peculiar and exquisite culture of the quatrain, and with such success as to exalt

him to a special and unique place in literature. Only three short poems are to be found on its pages, the shortest of ten lines. This book did not command the attention it deserved, and is now, I believe, out of print.

CHAPTER XI

"POEMS." "AN OCTAVE TO MARY." "LYRICS." "THE ROSARY IN VERSE"

Father Tabb, however, soon began to awaken the public to the fact that a new star was mounting the poetic horizon. The first magazines of this country and England published his verses, which were widely copied, and the critics were generous in praise; so that when in December, 1894, his second volume "Poems," dedicated to Sidney Lanier, appeared, it was welcomed on all sides; and that it touched a chord in the hearts of the people was evidenced by the fact that in January, 1895, a second edition was called for. A copy came to me later from a dear friend, long departed, who made in my favor a sacrifice; for it had been the gift of the Reverend Charles Ramm, whose exquisite quatrain on the flyleaf was a worthy introduction to the poet-priest he so admired:

> The poet's prophet's eyes a form of beauty see—
> A glimpse of God, a vision fair—
> He chains it fast in measured links till we
> Of dimmer sight his rapture share.

Prominent British critics placed the author of "Poems" in the front rank of American poets; and some pronounced him one of the greatest living poets in the English language.

"An Octave to Mary," somewhat of an *edition de luxe,* in white or blue and gold, and bearing as frontispiece the Annunciation by E. Burne-Jones, had appeared during the preceding year. From the eight filial tributes to Mary, none of which exceeds in length three sestets, I select a bit of dialogue on the "Purification":

A PAIR OF TURTLE DOVES

Where, Woman, is thine offering—
  The debt of law and love?
"My Babe a tender nestling is,
  And I the mother-dove."

The book of "Lyrics," inscribed "To the Memory of My Mother," appeared in 1897—four editions between March and November. I was so fortunate as to receive my copy directly from the author, with his New Year greeting, and on the flyleaf the octet, "Ready."

They might not need me
  Yet they might;
I'll let my heart be
  Just in sight.
A smile so small as
  Mine might be
Precisely their
  Necessity.

Father Tabb had read a critical estimate of his book of "Poems" which I had written to a young relative, and this was the grateful out-

pouring of his heart for so slight a favor. Stranger that I was to him, I was quite overpowered.

"Child Verse" was issued in 1899; and in 1902 another volume was given to an eager public—"Later Lyrics," dedicated to his sister, to whom he was devotedly attached. The opening poem, haunting in its music, is a revelation of the poet's longings:

TO A SONGSTER

O little bird, I'd be
A Poet like to thee,
Singing my native song—
Brief to the ear, but long
To Love and Memory.

"The Rosary in Verse," another tribute of love to Mary, is a chain of fifteen precious pearls of verse. The opening mystery, "The Annunciation," is told thus:

Accustomed in the highest heights to be,
  The Angel bowed in awe,
As if, amazed before Humility,
  A deeper heaven he saw.

And the final mystery, "The Coronation of Mary," is portrayed with equally striking brevity:

Thee, Mother-Queen of Heaven, He crowned,
  And not for love alone;
For in thy bosom first He found
  The life-spring of His own.

This little volume is dedicated "To the Right Reverend Alfred A. Curtis, D. D., with the love and veneration of his first son in Christ." It is an exquisite specimen of book-making by Small, Maynard & Co., Boston, 1904, embellished with fifteen full-page decorative drawings and initial letters by Thomas B. Meteyard; the edition was limited to three hundred and fifty copies.

CHAPTER XII

MRS. MEYNELL'S SELECTION OF VERSES. "QUIPS AND QUIDDITS." "LATER POEMS"

In 1907 the title page of a new book read: "A Selection from the Verses of John B. Tabb, made by Alice Meynell." This selection, a worthy one in every respect, as the name of the poet and essayist who made it would attest, gave great pleasure to Father Tabb, who dedicated the book to Mrs. Meynell. His sight was now fast failing, and my presentation copy was followed by a brief and touching postal in a tremulous hand of the date of January 3, 1908. "I send you, dear———, 'The Living Age,' with a very kind notice from the London Times. This, with my greeting, is all I can do. Gratefully and faithfully yours, John B. Tabb."

Mrs. Meynell had spent some months on the California coast with friends in 1901-02, where she corresponded with Father Tabb, who sometimes sent me her letters to read. He remarks to me in a letter dated October, 1901: "She is perhaps the best Catholic English writer, and Ruskin, whose life she wrote, calls her a great critic. Her lecture, I am sure, is a great literary treat. . . . Hoping you may see her if she comes to Washington, or, still better, hear her, I am, Your friend in Christ, John B. Tabb."

He had made extraordinary efforts to procure for the famous poet and essayist a sufficient number of engagements to justify a trip to the East, and I, too, with friends, had entered with zest into the enterprise. To his great regret, it failed.

Apart from Mrs. Meynell's fame as a writer, Francis Thompson had portrayed her in lines of such Dantean beauty in "Love in Dian's Lap" that it seemed to her friends she should have been the observed of all observers in our country. Personally, my admiration for her as a writer is extraordinary, but my affections have long been hers—apart, unknown—for the unspeakable kindnesses which she, in conjunction with her husband, showered upon the neglected poet: she deserved, indeed, to be raised to immortality by his pen, which honored her equally in her children in "Sister Songs" and other poems.

In April, 1912, Father Tabb writes: "I am sending herewith a letter from Mrs. Meynell, and the verses of mine which she kindly approves. Accept them with the Easter greetings of Your friend in Christ, John B. Tabb." These three exquisite six-lined stanzas bore the title, "To Her First-Born." A postscript added: "Nothing from Mrs. Meynell since I wrote you last. On the 12th, I think, she sails."

In the same year, 1907, "Quips and Quiddits," an illustrated book of humorous verse,

came from the press. The edition of "Selections" just mentioned had been bound in a color which seems to have appealed to Father Tabb's sense of humor, and one of these "Quips" reads as follows:

ON THE COVER OF JOHN B. TABB'S
LATE LONDON VOLUME

His eyes are dim:
And so for him,
They thought in London, 'twas enough
To bind his book in blind-man's *buff*.

The illustrations, which add to the humor of the volume, were designed, I conjecture, by the author's own pen. A doubtful point in historical records he amusingly discusses in

QUEEN BESS

Or praise or obloquy is hers
As history has viewed her;
To some a 1 der she appears,
To others but a 2 dor.

The poet plays with the instruments of his art in

UNSTATIONARY STATIONERY

The Wax waxed hotter and hotter
Till the Seal took his seat on her back;
And the Pen wiped his foot on the Blotter,
And laughed at them both from the Rack.

Here is the penalty inflicted for a slip in orthography.

TO MR. ANDREW LANG, WHO SPELLED MY NAME "TAB"

O why should Old Lang Sign
  A compliment to me
(If it indeed is mine)
  And filch my final b?
To him as to the Dane
  In his soliloquy,
This question comes again,—
  "2 b or not 2 b?"

"Later Poems" came to the world as a dying gift from the poet, dedicated

"To M. A. C.
to whom
My Right Reverend Father in Christ
the late
Bishop Alfred A. Curtis, D. D.,
commended his son."

It was a collection of poems that had honored the columns of the Atlantic Monthly, Harper's Magazine and others during his later years. His blindness prevented his preparation of the volume for the press. A letter dated March 2, 1909, and dictated to another hand, refers to the forthcoming poems: "Dear ——: Thank you for your letter, but not for the premature embalming of your friend; after I am dead, folks may say what they please, but my poor living body does not fancy perfume. . . . Mrs. Meynell is preparing my last volume for publication, a copy of which you shall have

when it appears. As to the sketch of my life, I'm fighting hard to baffle the project. . . . Please accept my best blessing and give me your prayers. Ever yours faithfully, John B. Tabb."

The beloved author did not live to see his "Later Poems" in print. He was summoned to his heavenly reward in November of the same year, and the volume came from the press (Kennerly, New York) only in 1910. Its hundred and more poems seemed to those who loved him and treasured his least words a little shower of pearls dropped on his way to Heaven. Deeply pathetic and touching are the poems—a decade of them—on his blindness, which breathe to us his last message of resignation and hope and love as he sought more than ever the eternal light that shines in the soul from the unseen world.

CHAPTER XIII

ESTIMATE OF HIS POEMS. HIS OPTIMISTIC SPIRIT

A tragic writer, Alcestides, boasted that whereas Euripides had composed only three verses in three days, he himself had written three hundred. "Thou sayest the truth," answered the dramatist, "but thine shall be read only three days, while mine shall last for three ages." To my mind, the same scale of proportion may be used in comparing the ephemeral fame of a score of prolix poets of our own day with Father Tabb's enshrinement in the hearts of a long-abiding posterity. A lover and apprenticed student of the Elizabethan writers, pre-eminently of the Shakespearean drama, which he taught with unparalleled enthusiasm, Father Tabb's poetic phrase is woven with the exquisite skill and variety of the genius of that age, whether he rises to the elevated truths that so captivated his noble intellect or expatiates in the most delicate regions of fancy. The rhythm is that of the musician whose ear is attuned to the perfection of melody. His language is indeed music; the overflow of vowels and soft consonants, the artistic freedom of accent, and the subtle interplay of different metres give a fascination to the poet's verse-making only inferior to the spell cast upon us by his thought and imagery.

Unlike Francis Thompson, he did not seek in the Elizabethan treasury words, however beautiful, that had the stamp of antiquity; nor did he ever coin new words for his purpose,—and he might have done so and added a golden score to the modern poet's vocabulary, so prodigious was his inventive power and so sane the judgment and taste that ruled it. The truth is, Father Tabb loved simplicity—he sang first for God, and then for every soul that wished to hear, from the princes of the realms of intellect and fancy to the simple and unlearned, yea, to the child.

The poet loves solitary places:

> to his capable ears
> Silence is music from the holy spheres:—

and the charm and divine contentment that Father Tabb found in "loneliness" he reveals to us in the lyric

> IN SOLITUDE
>
> Like as a brook that all night long
> Sings, as at noon, a bubble-song
> To Sleep's unheeding ear,
> The Poet to himself must sing,
> When none but God is listening
> The lullaby to hear.

In passing I would ask you to observe the perfect music of the versification, the tender voweling, the soft unobtrusive flow of the con-

sonants, the variable fall of the accent; in a few lines of iambic tetrameter and trimeter, we hear as well the pleasing ring of trochee, dactyl, amphibrach and spondee; and this ease and mastery of change betray everywhere the "maker and model of melodious verse."

Father Tabb was a lover of silence, too,—the silence of the soul: and his poems on this theme are notable and suggestive. Here he questions

SILENCE

Why the warning finger-tip
Pressed forever on thy lip?
"To remind the pilgrim Sound
That it treads on holy ground,
In a breathing space to be
Hushed for all eternity."

This lyric of six lines touches the sublime as well in its Scriptural allusion as in its great final thought. It recalls a brief lyric of John Boyle O'Reilly, which begins:

The Infinite ever is silent,
Only the finite speaks.

A masterly critic in the London "Times," quoted by "Littell's Living Age," remarks of the poem "To Silence": "Grandeur cannot be achieved in six lines by grandiloquence. In the immensity of what it suggests, the vast silence out of which it wakes and into which it fades, that poem is undeniably grand."

A cheerful and optimistic spirit shines through all Father Tabb's verses; not a trace of melancholy is to be found among them; his themes are sometimes sad, but soft and beautiful lights of hope, resignation, and kindred emotions make the sadness sweet; and you are led into visions of loveliness by the hand of Sorrow herself. I do not know a poem which illustrates better what I have said than that tender lyric "Confided," which is found in every American anthology. It is the plaint of a mother who has just laid her little babe in God's Acre.

Another lamb, O Lamb of God, behold,
Within this quiet fold,
Among Thy Father's sheep
I lay to sleep!
A heart that never for a night did rest
Beyond its mother's breast.
Lord, keep it close to Thee,
Lest waking it should bleat and pine for me!

His cheerfulness has a special winning power: it has held a charm for me since the day I opened the first book of "Poems." How softly he smiles sorrow away in the "Fern Song"!

Dance to the beat of the rain, little Fern,
And spread out your palms again,
  And say, "Tho' the sun
  Hath my vesture spun,
He had labored, alas, in vain,
  But for the shade
  That the Cloud hath made,

And the gift of the Dew and the Rain."
Then laugh and upturn
All your fronds, little Fern,
And rejoice in the beat of the rain!

No melancholy there! He would have us laugh and welcome the little trials that befall us—the Cloud and the Dew and the Rain, that come even into the sunny lives of youth, because they strengthen us and make us grow spiritually and intellectually. Here is what his happy nature thinks of

LAUGHTER

"Et ridebit in die novissimo"

When wrought of Joy and Innocence
'Tis unto God it goes,
A fragrance of the olive whence
His "oil of gladness" flows.

In a letter dated February, 1902, he writes: "As to the *blues,* I am upside down—the worst weather putting me in the best spirits. 'The Smart Set' has taken the following quatrain:

BY CONTRARIES

'Tis strange, but ominously true,
When we are bright the skies are blue;
But, let them change their livery,
And in a moment blue are we.

This, of course, only true of well-constructed people—not cranks, such as I."

CHAPTER XIV

HIS LOVE OF NATURE. FLOWER POEMS

Father Tabb has the poet's passionate love of nature, but sublimated; his sense of beauty was a part of his religion; and to such a spirit every object of creation becomes a ladder of light by which it mounts to the Maker of all things. Browning says:

> God is the Perfect Poet,
> Who in creation *acts* His own conceptions;

and to His hand Father Tabb clung like a little child, watching Him breathlessly, joyously, in the minutest details of creation—of life, motion, color, as expressed in the flower, the bird, the insect, in the elements, in the starry universe, in the complex workings of the Divine Spirit in the temple of human personality.

From the sacred Presence of the Tabernacle, where, like his saintly model, Bishop Curtis, he spent hours of fervent adoration, he would pass to his sanctuary of the woods, and there wait, assured of poetic inspiration. For there he swung anew the worship-cloud of incense in the golden censer of exquisite verse to the ever-present Creator.

Indeed, who can surpass his own conception of the divine art he so loved and honored? Read it:

POETRY

A gleam of Heaven; the passion of a star
  Held captive in the clasp of harmony;
A silence, shell-like breathing from afar
  The rapture of the deep—eternity.

The soul that has found its mystical union with the Maker is there, so it seems to me.

I have wondered if the poet saw the acorns fall as he sat that day in the woods with pen in hand and mused: we are the richer for his musings in

COMPENSATION

How many an acorn falls to die
  For one that makes a tree!
How many a heart must pass me by
  For one that cleaves to me!

How many a suppliant wave of sound
  Must still unheeded roll,
For one low utterance that found
  An echo in my soul!

How numerous and how varied in beauty and the suggested moral lesson are the flower poems! In one of his roamings through the woods he brought home to the college a flower, and to that we owe

MY CAPTIVE

I brought a blossom home with me
  Beneath my roof to stay;
But timorous and frail was she
  And died before the day:
She missed the measureless expanse
Of heaven, and heaven her countenance.

There is a sublimity of suggestion in the last two lines that often startles us in Father Tabb's singing, a hint of divine analogies that must give us pause.

"Wood Grain" is an exquisite lyric in dactylic metre: a bit of graphic picture-work intended, no doubt, to symbolize the hidden workings of God's grace in lives.

This is the way that the sap-river ran
From the root to the top of the tree—
Silent and dark,
Under the bark,
Working a wonderful plan
That the leaves never know,
And the branches that grow
On the brink of the tide never see.

Here is a little pearl of delicate sweetness and daintiness:

A SLEEPING-PLACE

When into the Rose
A ladybird goes
And o'er her couch the petals close,
Was ever bed
So canopied
For lids in maiden slumber wed?

Now in soft trochaics and glowing rhetoric he is chatting familiarly with "The Yellow Crocus."

Were you, little Monarch, crowned
Under ground?
Or did the Daylight make you king
Of the Spring?

Ere your blossom-retinue
Come to you,
I, before your Majesty,
Bow the knee.

Did you ever feel like this when you saw the first Crocus? I feel so every March.

And can you find a more fascinating little bit of drama than the poet presents in

THE TAX-GATHERER

"And pray, who are you?"
Said the Violet blue
To the Bee, with surprise
At his wonderful size,
In her eye-glass of dew.

"I, madam," quoth he,
"Am a publican Bee,
Collecting the tax
On honey and wax.
Have you nothing for me?"

The Violet claims many tender tributes—"To a Wood Violet," "Brotherhood," "The Violet Speaks," "One April Morn," and others.

CHAPTER XV

FLORAL LYRICS—CONTINUED

Spring never came forth under the veil of Allegory in more exquisite and touching beauty than she appears to us in

THE TRYST OF SPRING

Stern Winter sought the hand of Spring,
And, tempered to her milder mood,
Died leafless on the budding breast
He fondly wooed.

She wept for him her April tears,
But, from the shadows wandering soon,
Dreamed of a warmer love to come
With lordly June.

He scatters roses at her feet,
And sunshine o'er her queenly brow,
And through the listening silence breathes
A bridal vow.

She answers not; but, like a mist
O'erbrimmed and tremulous with light,
In sudden tears she vanishes
Before his sight.

Does not the last stanza appeal to you with a poignant human touch?

Two far apart—beauty in sublimity and beauty in littleness—are made lovable person-

alities in Dawn and the Blossom, and brought into dramatic contact in "Come True." Amid the train of conceptions that their tender colloquy evokes, the final one is dominant—the sweetly living and ever-ruling thought of Father Tabb—of the transitoriness of all earthly glories, the passing away of mortal hopes and loves.

> "Good morrow!" breathed the Blossom.
> "Good morrow!" flushed the Dawn.
> "Where were you, dear, before the light?
> For I was dreaming all the night
> That we should meet anon,
> To drink a dewdrop here today,
> And then together pass away."

The apostrophe "To a Rose," beginning

> Thou hast not toiled, sweet Rose,
> Yet needest rest,

summons up its counterpart, Herrick's lovely "Daffodils," so persistent a favorite of mine, that it has been painted on Memory's canvas by each succeeding band of pupils. I deem that both poets stood in contemplation before the flowers of their love, when of a sudden each calyx became a well-spring of inspiration; and they turned from the spot in a brief space their dream of beauty and tears—of "Life's mystery"—transferred to their tablets for an entranced posterity.

It is hard to restrain the temptation to cull more of the poet's dainty Flora, for it is a royal garden in which Father Tabb's Muse disports, and she has a loving glance and a lyric for all these rainbow children of the sun, yea, even for the "Wild Flowers" that strew the woods beyond her crystal gate. The common "Clover" of our fields, mounting Nature's pulpit, becomes the poet's teacher. Brimming with simplicity and reverence, a revelation of beauty, and breathing subtle intimations of the Trinity and Unity of God, the most majestic dogma of our faith, this poem recalls St. Patrick standing before the King of Tara and conveying to him through the little three-leaved shamrock the mysterious lesson of Christianity.

CLOVER

Little Masters, hat in hand,
Let me in your presence stand,
Till your silence solve for me
This your threefold mystery.

Tell me—for I long to know—
How, in darkness there below,
Was your fairy fabric spun,
Spread and fashioned, three in one.

Did your gossips, gold and blue,
Sky and Sunshine, choose for you,
Ere your triple forms were seen,
Suited liveries of green?

Can ye—if ye dwelt indeed
Captives of a prison seed—
Like the Genie, once again
Get you back into the grain?

Little Masters, may I stand
In your presence, hat in hand,
Waiting till you solve for me
This your threefold mystery?

CHAPTER XVI

BIRD LYRICS

In a group of enchanting bird lyrics—more than thirty of them—the little minstrels of the air most dear to us are all immortalized. Now Father Tabb is watching a pair of birds building a nest—a most fascinating bit of architecture, of which act I think I am an unimpeachable witness, having been chief assistant to the thrush and wren on many occasions. He daintily pictures the planning of the airy structure, the laying of the eggs, the hatching of the fledgelings, and the flight. Now it is a lark high in the air, athrob with life and song—anon it is a dead thrush that awakens his sympathy. The bluebird, the robin, the lovely killdee, "a rhapsody of light,"—and how many more!—all chant their madrigals for him and he in turn sings their praises in dewy poesy. There he is bending over a "Humming-Bird" which his poet-brush paints for us in this fashion:

A flash of harmless lightning,
  A mist of rainbow dyes,
The burnished sunbeams brightening,
  From flower to flower he flies:

While wakes the nodding blossom,
  But just too late to see
What lip hath touched her bosom
  And drained her nectary.

The mocking-bird, I think, is his favorite, after the killdee. "O heart that cannot sleep for song!"—he so addresses that midnight warbler, delirious with rapture, in one poem; and in another, "A Phonograph," he sums up the bird's whole score of musical robberies in a delicious quatrain:

> Hark! what his fellow warblers heard
> And uttered in the light,
> Their phonograph, the mocking-bird,
> Repeats to them at night.

The story is told by many lyrists how the dear robin's breast became red, but by none, I conceive, so briefly and sweetly as by Father Tabb. Judge for yourselves:

> When Christ was taken from the rood,
> One thorn upon the ground,
> Still moistened with the Precious Blood,
> An early Robin found
> And wove it crosswise in his nest,
> Where, lo, it reddened all his breast!

The poet conjures "Two Sparrows" from their far-away home in the Scriptural land to renew for us the Master's lesson:

> To creatures upon earth,
> Our price one farthing worth:
> To everlasting Love
> All price above.

And in the same vein of Scriptural reverence is

HOLY GROUND

Pause where apart the fallen sparrow lies,
And lightly tread;
For there the pity of a Father's eyes
Enshrines the dead.

Of this quatrain a London critic says with truth: "In that thought lies the secret of the unity for which Father Tabb seeks in living and dead, man and flower, great and small."

"The Dead Thrush" is all melody. A bird-lover cannot see the beautiful speckle-breast that charmed so many summer hours lying stark without a pang akin to that for human loss: I know one, at least, who has suffered this pang many times. But Father Tabb's elegy is full of hope. Here is his first stanza:

Love of nest and mate and young
Woke the music of his tongue,
While upon the fledgeling's brain
Soft it fell as scattered grain,
There to blossom tone for tone
Into echoes of his own.

I cannot part with these lovely warblers of the "sylvan solitudes" without listening awhile with the poet to the strains of

THE WOOD ROBIN

The wooing air is jubilant with song;
And blossoms swell
As leaps thy liquid melody along
The dusky dell,
Where Silence, late supreme, foregoes her wonted spell.

. . . . . .

Teach me, thou warbling eremite, to sing
Thy rhapsody;
Nor borne on vain ambition's vaunting wing,
But led of thee,
To rise from earthly dreams to hymn eternity.

CHAPTER XVII

BABYHOOD AND YOUTH IN POESY

Love was the principle of Father Tabb's life—primarily intense love of God, and then its natural outcome, love of the neighbor—that ardent love of souls that distinguishes the priest, yes, but moreover a cordial, tender, expansive, Christlike love which finds its object in the little babe on its mother's breast, in the gentle, pure maiden, in the rollicking boy, in every type of noble manhood or womanhood; his deep affections flow out to the stranger, to the erring, to the wanderer, to call them back by a thousand winning ways. The last two stanzas of "Visible Sound" proclaim this all-radiating and all-converging principle of life and beauty.

> Yea, Love, of sweet Nature the Lord,
> Hath fashioned each manifold chord
> To utter His visible Word,
>
> Whose work, wheresoever begun,
> Like the rays floating back to the Sun,
> In the soul of all beauty is *one*.

Francis Thompson wrote to his infant godchild, Francis Meynell—anticipating the arrival of this "heir of his song" in the Blessed Land long after his own entrance there—"Look for me in the NURSERIES of Heaven!" And judg-

ing from the alluring loveliness with which Babyhood sits throned in Father Tabb's poetic bower, crowned and circled by the "Rosebud" vines of his delicate fancy and tender affection, I am inclined to believe that the poet-priest has found a part of his beatitude in those "divine nurseries." Surely the "Babe Niva" must have welcomed him there:

> Niva, Child of Innocence,
> Dust to dust *we* go:
> *Thou,* when Winter wooed thee hence,
> Wentest snow to snow.

And the Babe whom he apostrophized in dying, too, smiled a heavenly greeting:

> O Bubble, break! All heaven thou hast
> Unsullied in thy heart!
> Ere Time its shadow on thee cast
> Love calls thee to depart.

But let us descend the crystal ladder to earth again, and, entering on tiptoe into a dainty nursery of Time, see with the poet's eyes

BABY

> Baby in her slumber smiling,
> Doth a captive take:
> Whispers Love, "From dreams beguiling
> May she never wake!"

When the lids, like mist retreating,
  Flee the azure deep,
Wakes a newborn Joy, repeating,
  "May she never sleep!"

And now behold the innocent Babe turned suddenly and bewitchingly into

AN IDOLATER

The Baby has no skies
But Mother's eyes;
Nor any God above
But Mother's love.
His Angel sees the FATHER'S face,
But he the Mother's full of grace;
And yet the Heavenly Kingdom is
Of such as this.

Hush! Listen to the lovely "Cradle-Song," a tribute to mother-love which, I doubt not, for its exquisite pathos and tender reminiscence, has drawn tears from many a mother's eyes:

Sing it, Mother! sing it low:
  Deem it not an idle lay.
In the heart 't will ebb and flow
  All the life-long way.

. . . . . .

Sing it, Mother, Love is strong!
  When the tears of manhood fall,
Echoes of thy cradle-song
  Shall its peace recall.

Sing it, Mother! when his ear
  Catcheth first the Voice Divine,
Dying, he may smile to hear
  What he deemeth thine.

How playfully and carefully the poet-uncle has portrayed "Baby's Dimples"!

> Love goes playing hide-and-seek
> Mid the roses on her cheek,
> With a little imp of Laughter,
> Who, the while he follows after,
> Leaves the footprints that we trace
> All about the Kissing-place.

And here, more attractive in its dainty picturesqueness than any that ever came from a king's garden, is

A BUNCH OF ROSES

> The rosy mouth and rosy toe
> Of little baby brother,
> Until about a month ago
> Had never met each other;
> But nowadays the neighbors sweet,
> In every sort of weather,
> Half way with rosy fingers meet,
> To kiss and play together.

Yet "Chanticleer,"

> A crowing, cuddling little Babe was he,

would perhaps gain the prize over them all for winning charm and for pathos—that sudden pull at the heartstrings that leaves an ache long after.

In a graphic Allegory of six stanzas, "The New-Year Babe," Father Tabb tells us how

Two together, Babe and Year,
  At the midnight chime,
Through the darkness drifted here
  To the coast of Time.

After a journey to "the land of May" and on "through the Vale of Autumn to the Mount of Snow,"

Then together Babe and Year
  Slept: but ere the dawn,
Vanishing, I know not where,
  Brother Year was *gone!*

Father Tabb has honored Maidenhood by many pure and lovely conceptions. My readers will pardon me if I choose two that touch upon the shadow of life, poems that leave a feeling of exquisite sadness that the heart often loves better than mirth. The first is entitled

MAIDEN BLOOM

Where the youthful rivals meet—
  Reddest Rose and whitest Snow—
From a trysting-place so sweet,
  Which will soonest go?
"Hence with life alone I stray,"
  Blushed the flower of balmy breath.
"Mine," the snow-wreath sighed, "to stay
  Steadfast e'en in death."

The second poem is a favorite, and was copied very widely when it first appeared in one of the leading magazines of the country. "The

White Jessamine" sings its own idyl of love for the little maiden who had planted it and lovingly watched its climbing tendrils, but ere it had throbbed into bloom suddenly fell ill. The Jessamine at last in the stillness of night reaches her window, where, it tells us,

Her gentle whisper thrilled me
  Ere I gazed upon her face.

I waited, darkling, till the dawn
  Should touch me into bloom,
While all my being panted
  To outpour its first perfume;
When, lo! a paler flower than mine
  Had blossomed in the gloom!

Was ever Death symbolized with such delicacy—such soft and touching picturesqueness of suggestion?

There is a charm natural and sweet combined with innocent restfulness in the dainty question and answer Allegory, "The Playmates."

Who are thy playmates, boy?
"My favorite is Joy,
Who brings with him his sister, Peace, to stay
  The livelong day.
I love them both; but he
  Is most to me."

And where thy playmates now,
O man of sober brow?
"Alas! dear Joy, the merriest, is dead.
  But I have wed
Peace; and our babe, a boy,
  New-born, is Joy."

CHAPTER XVIII

FATHER TABB'S FRIENDSHIP WITH SIDNEY LANIER

The memories of many noble and tender friendships are scattered through the pages of Father Tabb's poems, but one stands luminous: a veritable pillar of light to the poet, it would seem, was Sidney Lanier—of whom we made an earlier mention. Besides his poems, Mr. Lanier wrote novels, historical studies, essays, and a valuable work on the relations between music and poetry called "The Science of English Verse." Stedman, the great American poet and critic, wrote: "When Sidney Lanier died (in 1881), not only the South that bore him, but the whole country and our English rhythm underwent the loss of a rare being." On the dedication page of Father Tabb's "Poems" his name is set in immortal lines:

AVE: SIDNEY LANIER

Ere Time's horizon-line was set,
Somewhere in space our spirits met,
Then o'er the starry parapet
    Came wandering here.
And now that thou art gone again
Beyond the verge, I haste amain
(Lost echo of a loftier strain)
    To greet thee there.

In "Love's Hybla" and many other lyrics the poet sends his minor strain up to his departed friend reigning in immortality. Here is one of these deep heart poems:

TO SIDNEY LANIER

The dewdrop holds the heaven above
  Wherein a lark unseen
Outpours a rhapsody of love
  That fills the space between.

My heart a dewdrop is, and thou
  Dawn-spirit, far away
Fillest the void between us now
  With an immortal lay.

Their poetic styles are in remarkable contrast. Rich, magnificent, diffuse, Lanier rolls out his verses in great waves of song, and, while they are pervaded with a highly sensuous beauty and overflowing with human sympathies, here and there you encounter lofty conceptions of the greatness of God which bring you to your knees in worship and make manifest the secret of the bond that so welded Father Tabb's soul to his. But Father Tabb *moves* and *breathes* in the heavenly atmosphere—he would have everything in nature, in art, in life, bring us into closer relations with the Creator, with the Redeemer, with Heaven; he would sow a seed in our heart of faith heroic, of hope unfading, of love unutterable.

It will not be amiss to give a specimen of Sidney Lanier's verse. Of all his poems, I yielded most spontaneously to the fascinations of "The Marshes of Glynn," a poem of one hundred and five lines, which first appeared anonymously and attracted attention at once by its exquisite word-painting, its rich imagery, and its musical quality. One must read the whole poem in a quiet mood to appreciate its beauty.

THE MARSHES OF GLYNN

O braided dusks of the oak and woven shades of the vine,
While the riotous noonday sun of the June day long did shine,
Ye held me fast in your heart and I held you fast in mine;
But now when the noon is no more, and riot is rest,
And the sun is a-wait at the ponderous gate of the West,
And the slant yellow beam down the wood-aisle doth seem
Like a lane into Heaven that leads from a dream—

. . . . . .

Bending your beauty aside, with a step I stand
On the firm-packed sand,
Free
By a world of marsh that borders a world of sea.

. . . . . .

Ye marshes, how candid and simple and nothing-withholding and free
Ye publish yourselves to the sky and offer yourselves to the sea!

Tolerant plains, that suffer the sea and the rains and
the sun,
Ye spread and span like the catholic man who hath
mightily won
God out of knowledge and good out of infinite pain,
And sight out of blindness and purity out of a stain.

As the marsh-hen secretly builds on the watery sod,
Behold I will build me a nest on the greatness of God!
I will fly in the greatness of God as the marsh-hen flies
In the freedom that fills all the space 'twixt the marsh
and the skies:
By so many roots as the marsh-grass sends in the sod
I will heartily lay me a-hold on the greatness of God:
Oh, like to the greatness of God is the greatness within
The range of the marshes, the liberal marshes of
Glynn.

Father Tabb's appreciation of Sidney Lanier's poems is unique—before him he "hides his diminished head," calls himself, as you have read, "Lost echo of a loftier strain." One eminent English critic remarks, however: "It is interesting to contrast the long, voluminous, rushing flow of Lanier . . . with the minute, delicately carved work of his countryman. Which is the greater poet, let those who like giving marks decide; but Father Tabb, working within the limits which the nature of his art inevitably determined, piping, so to speak, upon his flute, can do things which Lanier's great four-manual organ could never accomplish."

I was surprised and pleased some months ago by a tender little note from Mrs. Sidney

Lanier, who had heard of my forthcoming sketch of Father Tabb. The poet-priest remained devoted to her in the bonds of sympathy and holy friendship until his death. Her deep sensitive nature never recovered, I think, the shock of her gifted husband's death; and Father Tabb used to deplore her failing health to his friends. Here is her missive:

"To the lover of Sidney Lanier's poems, whose kind greeting has come to me by Father Hasenfus, I would return the sympathy and thanks of her friend-in-will and her friend-in-Christ.

"MARY DAY LANIER.

"September 13th, 1914,
Lanier Camp, Eliot, Maine."

Father Tabb was present at the Lanier Memorial Meeting in Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, and paid the eloquent tribute of lifelong admiration and love to Sidney Lanier's genius. From the far-away year of his prison life, his memory had faithfully retained one cherished theme of Lanier's Flute; this he gave to Mr. E. E. Trumbull, who arranged and harmonized it under the title: "A Melody from Sidney Lanier's Flute." Father Tabb popularized the song by some accompanying lines.

CHAPTER XIX

HIS FRIENDSHIP WITH BISHOP CURTIS
UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

Knowing the friendship, of a celestial order, that bound him to Bishop Curtis from his youthful years, it cannot be doubted that a number of the poems owe their inspiration to the Bishop, while others are tenderly reminiscent of his "angel visits." The saintly prelate's chief and recognized virture was his profound humility; and the disciple, I suspect, was "under orders" not to set his Master's name upon his immortal pages. It was a marvel that he was permitted to dedicate to him the beautiful "Rosary in Verse." Among the poems to which my belief on this point clings is

WESTWARD

And dost thou lead him hence with thee,
    O setting sun,
And leave the shadows all to me
    When he is gone?
Ah, if my grief his guerdon be,
    My dark his light,
I count each loss felicity,
    And bless the night.

"Photographed" and "O'erspent" equally point to Bishop Curtis as their source of being, as well as the deep and sincere heart-cry,

ALTER EGO

Thou art to me as is the sea
Unto the shell;
A life whereof I breathe, a love
Wherein I dwell.

And no one can doubt that his friend in dying inspired "Finis," one of the last poignant strains of the lyrist's heart. It is touched with indescribable pathos because of the cruel sufferings of his holy director during the illness preceding his death in 1908, and Father Tabb's own blindness and fast-failing health.

FINIS

O to be with thee sinking to thy rest,
Thy journey done;
The world thou leavest blessing thee and blest,
O setting sun!
The clouds, that ne'er the morning joys forget,
Again aglow,
And leaf and flower with tears of twilight wet
To see thee go.

There is a feature of universal brotherhood that cannot fail to impress one in reading Father Tabb. It is the echo of our Saviour's words: "Love one another as *I* have loved you." My choice shall fall upon three out of many that are steeped in the fragrance of this doctrine:

GOD'S LIKENESS

Not in my own, but in my neighbor's face,
Must I Thine image trace;
Nor he in his, but in the light of mine,
Behold Thy Face Divine.

TO THE CHRIST

Thou hast on earth a Trinity,—
Thyself, my fellow-man and me;
When one with him, then one with thee;
Nor, save together, Thine are we.

CHARITY

If but the world would give to Love
The crumbs that from its table fall,
'T were bounty large enough for all
The famishing to feed thereof.

And Love, that still the laurel wins
Of Sacrifice, would lovelier grow,
And round the world a mantle throw
To hide its multitude of sins.

Perhaps in contrast to these I might quote a rather original and humorous conception peculiar to Father Tabb; it is entitled

THE STRANGER

He entered; but the mask he wore
  Concealed his face from me.
Still, something I had seen before
  He brought to memory.

Who art thou? What thy rank, thy name?
  I questioned with surprise;
"Thyself," the laughing answer came,
  "As seen of others' eyes."

And the littleness of "Prejudice," that vice of purblind souls, that destroyer of a fellow-creature's influence, that stumbling-block to

many good and noble works, is unfolded in four lines of metaphor:

> A leaf may hide the largest star
> From Love's uplifted eye;
> A mote of prejudice out-bar
> A world of charity.

The priest-poet's large-hearted sympathies stretched from "The Hermit," who,

> High on the mountain-top,
> . . . . . spelt
> The name of the Omnipotent, and knelt
> In lowly reverence of adoring love,

across the great universe of human struggle and fulfillment and tragic failure even to the despairing outcast in "Quo Vadis?"

> The sedge was sere; the water still,
> As waiting for the wintry chill;
> When, shadow-like along the hill,
> She moved alone.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> A plunge, a ripple, and a sigh
> Of waters;—fleeting soul, reply,
> Was it for death of Love to die,
> Or to atone?

You whose hearts are divided from kindred hearts, who look back upon years of separation, whereas Love should have been playing chords of harmony and union all through your saddened lives, read

LIFE

The Power that lifts the leaf above
And sends the root below,
Sustains the heart in brother-love
And makes it *heavenward* grow.

In "The Bridge" the poet symbolizes and prays for the brotherhood of the nations. The last stanza of the five is an appeal.

O that, all strife above,
Strong in the strength thereof,
Man evermore
Built, with a broader span,
Love for his fellow-man
From shore to shore!

CHAPTER XX

FEASTS OF THE CHURCH. CHRISTMAS POEMS

The Feasts of the Church hold their consecrated rites in the poet-priest's sanctuary of Poesy. There is a little galaxy of Christmas poems of wondrous diversity. I have already quoted one that concentrates a whole mission sermon in its six starry lines,—"A Little Boy of Heavenly Birth." Among many others are "The Lamb-Child," "A Christmas Cradle," "The Angel's Christmas Quest," and the favorite allegory of the Christmas dream, so pictorial, so overflowing with scriptural suggestion, and so redolent of deep peace,—

MISTLETOE

To the cradle-bough of a naked tree,
  Benumbed with ice and snow,
A Christmas dream brought suddenly
  A birth of mistletoe.

The shepherd stars from their fleecy cloud
  Strode out on the night to see;
The Herod north-wind blustered loud
  To rend it from the tree.

But the old year took it for a sign,
  And blessed it in his heart:
"With prophecy of peace divine,
  Let now my soul depart."

The second chapter of St. Luke's Gospel becomes dearer than ever when you have mastered that poem and carry it in your heart. May I analyze it a little?

The poet has chosen the simplest form of verse, as befits the great theme. The rhythm is music: the sound is perfectly adapted to sense in the lines. In the second stanza the spondees add to the majesty of the first picture, and to the strength of the last.

From the opening phrase the Divine Infant is the life of the poem. "To the cradle-bough" is a lovely invention, suggestive of birds' nests rocking in the summer breezes; but then you are confronted with

> a naked tree
> Benumbed with ice and snow,

an emblem of the wintry cave of Bethlehem, where a manger received the trembling frame of the Babe new-born; typified, too, in the figure, is the then state of the wide, hopeless, cold-hearted world. The Dream-Feast and the Birth seem like fairy-land consecrated.

How finely is the Allegory drawn out in the next stanza! The shepherds "keeping the night watches over their flocks" become shepherd stars, the clouds their lambs; and borne at once to the starry heavens, are we not subtly conscious of the angelic presences, even the harmonies of their *Gloria?* "Strode out in the

night to see" is a line of power—a Thompsonian line; and the blustering "northwind" is a mirrored type of the cruel Herod, "who sought the Child to destroy Him," and, foiled by the Kings, slew a multitude of "Innocents," secure that His Blood would swell the sacrificial torrent.

But what a deep significance in "the old year"! The aged and holy Simeon rises before us, the type of the ancient dispensation, who "entered the temple by the Spirit" just as Mary and Joseph bore the Babe-Victim within its hallowed precincts to present Him to His Eternal Father. Taking the Child in his arms, the aged saint at once knew his God, the Expectation of Israel, and, with supreme happiness, chanted his "Nunc dimittis,"—"Now dost Thou dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, in peace, because my eyes have seen Thy Salvation."

The first soft slumbers of the new-born Infant are commemorated in twelve lines of exquisite imagery—the last three divinely beautiful, with the glow of more than seraphic love.

AT THE MANGER

When first her Christmas watch to keep,
Came down the silent angel, Sleep,
    With snowy sandals shod,
Beholding what His Mother's hands
Had wrought, with softer swaddling-bands
    She swathed the Son of God.

Then, skilled in mysteries of night,
With tender visions of delight
She wreathed His resting place,
Till, wakened by a warmer glow
Than Heaven itself had yet to show,
He saw His Mother's face.

Here we listen to divine words from the very lips of "The Babe to the Gift-Bearer."

I cannot hold within My hands
Thy gift, but here My Mother stands
To take it as My own.
It is through her I come to thee,
And now our go-between is she
Till I am older grown.

There is a haunting music from many Epiphany strains, with their high faith rising almost to vision; let us listen to one that is interwoven with an ancient classical theme, in

THE ARGONAUTS

To Bethlehem, to Bethlehem,
The Magi move, and we with them,
Along the selfsame road;
Still following the Star of Peace,
To find at last the Golden Fleece—
The Spotless Lamb of God.

CHAPTER XXI

PASSION-FLOWERS AND EASTER LILIES

Father Tabb has planted in his garden of sacred verse a score of beautiful Passion-Flowers, which bear the heart to Calvary and Gethsemane.

The triple stanzas of "The Vigil of Good Friday" might be called a perfect elegy of St. Peter's denial of Christ—"I know Him not"—with its beautiful climax of repentance,

> O Christ! its perjury
> Love weeps for Thee!

Mary the Immaculate and Mary the penitent are pictured to us together during the Three Hours' Agony of the Saviour

> ON CALVARY
>
> In the shadow of the Rood
> Love and Shame together stood;
> Love, that bade Him bear the blame
> Of her fallen sister, Shame;
> Shame, that by the pangs thereof
> Bade Him break His Heart for Love.

Father Tabb's devotion to the Cross, the chief consolation in all life's trials, is manifest in many poems, touchingly so in his lines to the Crucifix hanging in his room, and touched with the early sun-rays.

Day after day the spear of morning bright
  Pierces again the ever-wounded side,
Pointing at once the birthspring of the light
  And where for Love the Light Eternal died.

The last day of Holy Week was a fount of inspiration to the poet. "Holy Saturday" is an apostrophe to "Earth who daily kissed His feet"; in it Love and Death enact a drama, and every line of the poem is a study. Of exceptional beauty and pathos is

EASTER EVE

Lo, now His deadliest foes prevail!
And where His bleeding footsteps fail,
Like wolves upon a victim's trail,
They gloat, in purple mockery, "Hail!"

O cloud! O regal vesture torn!
O shadow on the shoulders borne!
O diadem!—one starry thorn
Shall blossom into Easter morn!

As you descend the slope of the Mountain of Redemption, where the Passion-Flowers bloom, lo! you come upon the Divine Gardener surrounded by His spotless "Easter Lilies." "Easter Morning" welcomes His presence; "Rabboni" touchingly portrays His apparition to Magdalen; and the witnesses to His Resurrection are the

EASTER FLOWERS

We are His witnesses; out of the dim
Dank region of Death we have risen with Him.
Back from our sepulchre rolleth the stone,
And Spring, the bright Angel, sits smiling thereon.

We are His witnesses. See, where we lay
The snow that late bound us is folded away;
And April, fair Magdalen, weeping anon,
Stands flooded with light of the new-risen Sun!

Magdalen has captivated our poet's heart with as sure dominion as she did the hearts of Robert Southwell, Richard Crashaw and other devout lyrists. Her name, her love, her tears, her spikenard, lead the thought or adorn a figure in half a score of his opals of verse. "Rabboni" is not the least beautiful of these tributes of love.

"I bring Thee balm, and lo, Thou art not here!
Twice have I poured mine ointment on Thy brow,
And washed Thy feet with tears. Disdain'st Thou now
The spikenard and the myrrh?

"Has Death, alas, betrayed Thee with a kiss
That seals Thee from the memory of mine?"
"Mary!" It is the self-same Voice Divine.
"Rabboni!"—only this.

CHAPTER XXII

MARY IN HIS VERSE. DOGMAS

There is a heavenly attraction for the poet in Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, the most glorious type of womanhood, the lily of purity, the Spouse all fair and without spot, the Woman clothed with the sun of divine glory and love. Father Tabb's devotion to this perfect ideal of human holiness can scarcely be conceived except by one who is profoundly imbued with a like sentiment of tender filial piety.

Is not this piety set like a hidden jewel in the lines which recall the adoption of our race by Mary on Calvary?

SON OF MARY

She the Mother was of One—
Christ, her Saviour and her Son.
And another had she none?
Yea: her Love's beloved—John.

My readers are already acquainted with the volumes "An Octave to Mary" and "The Rosary in Verse," dedicated to her love. These rich offerings, however, were not enough for one who so often soared above the stars to behold her in her beauty. He portrays her from the beginning in

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

A Dew-drop of the darkness born,
  Wherein no shadow lies;
The blossom of a barren thorn,
  Whereof no petal dies;
A rainbow beauty passion-free,
Wherewith was veiled divinity.

The poet paints in sublime colors the "Fiat" of "The Annunciation,"—"the flaming word" that brought the Eternal down to a Virgin's womb. And the mystery is retold in "The Incarnation."

A weight to bow Thy Godhead to the ground,
And lift to Heaven a lost humanity.

We have had glimpses of the Mother's loveliness shrouded in the glory of her Babe in The Nativity; and we have stood with her under the Cross, suffused with emotions of awe and love such as stirred the depths of the poet's soul while he gazed and wrote. Yet see how he spans the heavens to call us again in worship to the Manger and the Cross in

STABAT MATER

The star that in His splendor hid her own
  At Christ's Nativity,
Abides—a widowed satellite—alone
  On tearful Calvary.

The triumph of his Queen, the crowning act of her Assumption into Heaven, the priest-poet hymns in more than one loving effusion. I

quote a strain in which lowly imagery, wedded to celestial beauty, bears witness to the holy audacity of Love in treating of divine things, Love, grown familiar—spirit to spirit—with the high courts of the invisible world.

THE ASSUMPTION

Behold! the mother bird
The Fledgeling's voice hath heard!
  He calls anew,
"It was thy breast
That warmed the nest
  From whence I flew.
Upon a loftier tree
Of life I wait for thee;
Rise, mother-dove, and come,
Thy Fledgeling calls thee home!"

Father Tabb's passionate love of the Dogmas of the Church has found ardent utterance in his poems, as one is forced to confess; indeed, I almost dare to say they form his chief message. The priest chants in high and worthy and persuasive verse the Eternal Truths, the deep mysteries of the Faith: "God, the All in All," Immortality, the Creation, the Fall and Redemption, the supreme love of God and of the neighbor, Heaven, hell (with shuddering beauty defending God's justice), and Purgatory, the Sacraments and the Virtues, the glories of the Priesthood and the Religious State. In truth, the harvest of heavenly wisdom garnered in these little sheaves of poesy is incalculable; and

the Sovereign Truth to whom they are consecrated, as was the whole life of the poet, has shed into them the perfumed essence of heavenly grace, that unction we find so often in the writings of saints and holy men.

To that most loyal son of the Church, as to Francis Thompson, "the very arrangement of the liturgical year is a suggested epic, based as it is on a deep parallel between the evolution of the seasons and that of the Christian soul of the human race."

CHAPTER XXIII

CONSIDERATION OF OTHER POEMS. TRAGEDY AND FANCY

It has been said by one who studied under Father Tabb and knew him well that the suggestive possibilities of his verse are limited only by the capacity of the reader; and nothing could be truer, for one must study some of these gnomic verses as a problem—dig into them as into a mine to make them yield up all the precious gems of thought, of fancy, of allusion, that lie hidden under the rich loam of word and phrase.

> What mighty epics have been wrecked by time
> Since Herrick launched his cockle-shells of rhyme?

sang Thomas Bailey Aldrich, and he himself floated a number of the same frail boats upon the sea of poesy. But I conceive that Herrick and Aldrich and many others of famous name, not excluding Richard Crashaw in his "Steps to the Temple," would veil their colors before Father Tabb's "cockle-shells" and without envy behold them far in the lead.

Yet Father Tabb at times, though rarely, gave larger play to his thought. "A Sigh of the Sea," which I consider one of the most finished

allegories I know, is expanded to eight quatrains; so also is "The Cloud," standing "above the eternal snows"—his first published effort, of which he remarked "God gave me the Cloud." Six enchanting quintets, varied in metre, are dedicated "To the Wood Robin," and the same number to "Echoes," for which the poet has lovingly appropriated the stanza of Shelley's "Ode to a Skylark," with perfect musical effect. In the third stanza he addresses them:

> Children of the distance,
> Shall I call in vain?
> From your slumbers waking,
> Speak to me again
> As erst in childhood woke your soft Aeolian strain!

And "The Swallow" "skims o'er the tide" in a brilliant craft of six sestets.

Tragedy chants its note of human desolation in many of the noble quatrains, nowhere, to my mind, with greater poignancy than under the symbol of

THE MAST

> The winds that once my playmates were
> No more my voice responsive hear,
> Nor know me, naked now and dumb,
> When o'er my wandering way they come.

In "Giulio," a poem of rhymed couplets (iambic tetrameter) which reads with the ease of blank verse, Sorrow tells her tale with fuller utterance. Brief yet piercing, thirty-six lines

suggest two life histories, one "dead to all but misery!"—the other waiting

> The consecrating vow
> Of priesthood.

How the poet has painted the agony of a sinning and repentant heart, merging at last into ecstatic joy at meeting with the loved one in the solemn hour of Death's anointing!

Fancy everywhere irradiates Father Tabb's pages, as we have seen. Here is a poem which lets us into the secret of her enchantment, an inspiration for an artist, and so dripping with melody that it seems, like many others, to have been composed to an inward music.

FANCY

> A boat unmoored, wherein a dreamer lies,
> The slumberous waves low-lisping of a land
> Where Love, forever with unclouded eyes,
> Goes, wed with wandering Music, hand in hand.

Here is a perfect creation of Fancy's delicate brush. Look at sound magically transformed into vision in

WHISPER

> Close cleaving unto Silence, into sound
> She ventures as a timorous child from land,
> Still glancing, at each wary step, around,
> Lest suddenly she lose her sister's hand.

How fanciful is "The Mist!" Suddenly metamorphosed into the mythic Eurydice, she rises from the darkness with Orpheus, now the singing Lark

> That leads her to the Dawn
> With rhapsodies of star delight,
> Till looking backward in his flight
> He finds that she is gone.

"Star delight?" a pupil questioned one day. "The poet perhaps suggests," I conjectured, "that as when Orpheus came up from the darkness of Erebus with his lost love, the sight of the starry heavens delighted him, so the stars are still in the sky, though shrinking away, as the Lark soars and sings in 'shrill delight.' And Orpheus' lyre, you know, was set in the heavens by the ancients—the beautiful little Constellation, Lyra, 'with all its star-chord seven.'" But I fear my hints will not satisfy so readily some of the grown-ups who have cavilled at the obscurity of "The Mist."

Father Tabb frankly plays with his imagery, but how often he rises from loveliest fancy to the deepest philosophy of life, as in

THE SEA-BUBBLE

> Yea, a bubble though I be,
> Love, O man, that fashioned thee
> Of the dust, created me
> Not of earth, but of the sea:
> Kindred blossoms then are we—
> *Time-blooms on eternity.*

A tender fancy is hidden under the lines "To Violet B. on Her Wedding-Day":

"Sweet it is for Love to live,"
  Thus a Blossom whispered me,
"But for Love a life to give
    (Tell my sister Violet—
  For a blossom, too, is she)
    Sweeter yet."

Had Father Tabb chosen to enrich the world of music with songs of his inditing, what a prophecy of success he has bequeathed us in "Come to Me, Robin!" in "Fade Not Yet, O Summer Day!" and in

Over the sea, over the sea,
My love he is gone to a far countrie;
But he brake a golden ring with me,
The pledge of his faith to be.

We can well forego the songs of earth, however, since our priest-poet has taught us sweet songs of the heavenly clime.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SONNETS

Many bards have sung the praises of the Sonnet: and Wordsworth in luminous lines reminds us that

> with this key
> Shakespeare unlocked his heart; the melody
> Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound;
> A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound;

and Gilder adds:

> This was the flame that shook with Dante's breath;
> The solemn organ whereon Milton played.

Few, indeed, among the "Enamored architects of airy rhyme," of differing ages and literatures, have failed to test their powers upon this form of poetry which has outlasted seven centuries, and has invaded with its fairy or solemn or tragic touch every domain of knowledge, human and divine, every issue of life and death, of time and eternity. Yet, strange to say, Father Tabb held such an instinctive aversion to the sonnet—its complexities and restraints—that only through the unceasing importunities of a brother professor he was at last prevailed upon to overcome his repugnance. To this happy influence we owe some of the most per-

fect sonnets in the English language, too few, alas! for there are only thirty, I believe, in all.

The reader will find a pleasant suggestion of Shakespeare in several of these "little pictures painted well." Although intricate and elaborate in form, they speak to us the simple language of the heart. The rhymed octave is always regular; the sestet, is, in general, classic, yet, since there are no less than eighteen different ways in which a poet may lawfully adapt its two or three rhymes, one is not surprised to find Father Tabb adjusting the rhyme-order to the exigencies of his thought. Add to this his delicate management of the cesura, the climax generally of octave and sestet, the singing quality of his verse, the unity which pervades every sonnet, and, above all, the exalted realm of his thought, his fancy, and his personal sympathies, and who shall say that our poet-priest has not won unfading glory by touching, though reluctantly, this sonnet-lyre with its fourteen golden strings?

Apart from the sacred sonnets I think my preference is for "Forecast," with its pictorial wealth of fancy and note of prophecy, which was surely verified in Father Tabb himself, who might well have been the babe upon whose spirit

> The dream, the song, the odor, each in one
> Upbreathing as a starry vapor, spread,
> And from the golden minarets of morn,
> Far heralding the unawakened sun,
> A rapture as of poesy outshed.

"Solitude" spheres as much grief for the loved and lost in its fourteen lines of faultless rhythm, exquisite phrasing and imagery, and striking climax, as Tennyson's "In Memoriam." "Love's Retrospect," too, is a memorial urn, garlanded with flowers, touched with sunlight, and dewed with tears; it consecrates a passing away of such moment to the poet that he could complain it had left

> a world henceforth to me
> In everlasting twilight.

Earlier pages have presented to my readers characteristic quotations from the sonnets. "Glimpses," "Daybreak," "The Dead Tree," abound in beauty and pathos; and "St. Afra to the Flames!" how exultantly she challenges them:

> Delay not! Leap the barriers and fire
> The citadel, the heart. A flame is there
> To which your kiss is coldness.

"Golgotha" and other of these art studies I must leave to the reader's quiet meditation, reproducing only a memory of the Night of Sorrow in "The Paschal Moon," which should be inscribed in letters of gold and read often by every heart that loves the Holy Hour. Note the strength and profound pathos of the first line, and the power and dignity of the double climax, rising to the sublime in the sestet.

THE PASCHAL MOON

Thy face is whitened with remembered woe;
  For thou alone, pale satellite, didst see,
  Amid the shadows of Gethsemane,
The mingled cup of sacrifice o'erflow;
Nor hadst the power of utterance to show
  The wasting wound of silent sympathy,
  Till sudden tides, obedient to thee,
Sobbed, desolate in weltering anguish, low.

The holy night returneth year by year;
  And, while the mystic vapors from thy rim
Distil the dews, as from the Victim there
  The red drops trickled in the twilight dim,
The ocean's changeless threnody we hear,
  And gaze upon thee as thou didst on Him.

CHAPTER XXV

PERSONALITY OF THE POET

A few paragraphs cited from a brief review of our poet by an intimate friend will supply a hiatus in these pages.

"Poet, soldier, priest, Father Tabb united in one personality the qualities which distinguished each individual calling. As a poet he was an idealist, seeing beauty and harmony in the lowliest as well as the highest things. As a soldier he was fearless and unswervingly loyal to the cause he had championed in his youth, while as a priest he was sympathetic and helpful to all with whom he came in contact. He possessed the heart and faith of a little child, combined with the confidence in an ever-loving and watchful Providence that gave him courage to live joyously, yet at all times face death unflinchingly.

"In appearance Father Tabb was slender of figure, slightly above the medium height and quick of movement—an active man, who enjoyed long walks through the blossoming country and whose eye and spirit were attuned to catch the beauty of every flower by the wayside.

"In manner he was cordially responsive or shy and reserved, according to his intimacy with

those with whom he was associating. About Ellicott City his face and figure were familiar to the entire community, with whom his relations were cordial in the extreme. Into the homes of a few families of the neighborhood the poet came and went as the mood impelled him. Always a welcome guest, he here cast aside reserve and was frankly interested in the affairs of the day, ready to discuss with boyish enthusiasm topics light or serious, the last novel, the latest drama—for he now and again attended a good play—an inspiring concert or the affairs of the nation."

I have to confess that, lacking the interesting details of his life history, I have been compelled to look into his poems for revelations of himself—of his inner life, of course, but also of his habits, and of external accidents and circumstances. I know nothing more engrossing, more toil-begetting, more perplexing, than the study of a great poet through his poems; yet nothing more rewarding, more satisfying on the whole, though many of these products of his brain and heart may tantalize you with their indecipherable significance. What more obvious illustration is afforded than some of the Elizabethan writers, whose enigmatic lines conceal volumes of biography; startling, perplexing, irreconcilable to tradition, they often portray a whole inner and outer life.

These pages have furnished to the reader more knowledge of the poet through his poems than through the paucity of my memoirs. Perhaps with a little pleasant searching we may glean a few more grains of truth.

"Matin-Song" pictures to us the opening of Father Tabb's day. He gave the dawning hours to God and counselled others to the practice. It is well to learn the poem for its perfect beauty of thought and diction, and to obey its call, keeping the altar of the heart "free for sacrifice." With what authoritative earnestness the poet-priest utters the invitation!

MATIN-SONG

Arise! Arise!
Dawns not the day without thy wakening eyes;
The mist that on them lies
Delays the blossom of the eastern skies.
'Tis at their light alone the darkness flies,
And Night, despairing, dies;
Behold thine altar free for sacrifice!
Arise! Arise!

And yet how many poems announce that Father Tabb was a victim of insomnia! "Sleep quiets all but me," he laments. In "The Agony," a perfect sonnet, he wrestles

as did Jacob, till the dawn,
With the reluctant Spirit of the Night
That keeps the keys of Slumber.

The Scriptural wrestling is carried out in exquisite detail, till at last the Angel

breathed upon my brow;
And as the dew upon the twilight hill
So on my spirit, overwearied now,
Came tenderly the benediction, Sleep.

"Insomnia" is a prayer.

E'en this, Lord, Thou didst bless;

. . . . . .

For 'twas while others calmly slept around
That Thou alone in sleeplessness wast found
To comfort me.

We may be pretty sure that under such recurrent night watchings Father Tabb courted a siesta in the afternoon; so he seems to hint in the playful tableau,

BARGAINS

"What have you in your basket?"
I questioned Mother Sleep.
"Ah, many a golden casket
Of jewel-dreams I keep
At pastime prices for the friend
Who's half an hour or more to spend."

A hidden life, yet how fruitful in activities was his! He husbanded the precious moments —valued the present as containing the whole of life.

'Tis in the *Present* I am free
The mental die to cast;
The future yet of mastery
Is palsied as the past;
Between, the breathless balance still
Awaits the hesitating will.

Among many current events that had an abiding interest for the poet we find

DARIEN

Thou partest sea from restless lover-sea
  That, yearning, dream and wait
The wedding of their waters, soon to be,
  When Science opes the gate.

I feel that I am treading on sacred ground when I venture into the temple of his memories. "The Departed" are very near and dear to him; they cannot wholly pass away,

For spirits in eternity,
  As shadows in the sun,
Reach backward into time as we,
  Like lifted clouds, reach on.

In "Retrospect," all his "old-time griefs" are seen in a new phase: memory transfigures them,

For there, in reconcilement sweet,
  The human and divine,
The loftiest and the lowliest, meet
  On Love's horizon-line.

Now memory travels back to his *Vita Nuova,* and he interrogates "The Summer Wind":

Art thou the self-same wind that blew
  When I was but a boy?

Its voice is sadder, perchance the echo of his own, he muses, now dwelling "beside a sea

of memories." And as loved ones come back under its spell, he questions in surprise:

> Are all the voices lost to me
> Still wandering the world with thee?

What a story of loneliness of heart, of thirst for sympathy from his fellows is intimated in "Exaltation!" He apostrophizes the "Leaf upon the highest bough, the Poet of the woods" —a symbol of himself and of all souls great in art. The second stanza reads:

> O leaf upon the topmost height,
> Amid thy heritage of light,
> Unsheltered by a shade,
> 'Tis thine the loneliness to know
> *That leans for sympathy below,*
> *Nor finds what it hath made.*

Who does not recall Michel Angelo, alone

> Amid his frescoes half divine,

longing for a word of sympathy, of appreciation from a human being; and this failing, behold! he pulls his Crucifix from his breast, raises it aloft before his last wonderful creation, and asks beseechingly: "Is that not beautiful, my Lord?" This longing is the seal of the kinship of genius with his brother-man.

CHAPTER XXVI

A SACRIFICE. "CONSECRATION"

There is a group of poems that to me are redolent of the incense of life's supreme sacrifice. I consider they can have but one solution—and that a heavenly one—ties rent willingly that two souls might walk in a higher vocation, a parting till the eternal years. "Love's Autograph" reads:

> *Once only* did he pass my way.
> "When wilt thou come again?
> Ah, leave some token of thy stay!"
> He wrote (and vanished), "Pain."

"An Influence" is permeated with a celestial loveliness: the symbol in the last stanza rises into sublimity with "a life's libation."

> I see thee—heaven's unclouded face
> A vacancy around thee made;
> Its sunshine a subservient grace
> Thy lovelier light to shade.
>
> I feel thee as the billows feel
> A river freshening the brine;
> A life's libation poured to heal
> The bitterness of mine.

I quote the poem "Consummation" without comment. It veils an experience that only the deep sympathetic insight of a rare reader, perhaps, can understand or interpret.

The interval
  We both recall,
  To each was all—

A moment's space
  That time nor space
  Can e'er efface.

'Tis all our own—
  A secret known
  To us alone:

My life to thee,
  As thine to me,
  Eternity.

It is not without an emotion of holy awe that we can take the poet's hand and enter with him, at his own solicitation, into the sanctuary where that solemn sacrifice of the heart is

ENSHRINED

Come quickly in and close the door,
For none hath entered here before,
The secret chamber set apart
Within the cloister of the heart.

Tread softly! 'Tis the Holy Place
Where memory meets face to face
A sacred sorrow, felt of yore,
But sleeping now forevermore.

. . . . . .

Love would not wake it, nor efface
Of anguish one abiding trace,
Since e'en the calm of Heaven were less,
Untouched of human tenderness.

"Cloistered" adds another crystal stone to this edifice of conjecture:

Within the compass of mine eyes
Behold a lordly city lies—
  A world to me unknown,
Save that along its crowded ways
Moves one whose heart in other days
  Was mated to mine own.

I ask no more; enough for me
One heaven above us both to see,
  One calm horizon-line
Around us, like a mystic ring
That Love has set, encompassing
  That kindred life and mine.

There are other poems and parts of poems in which these sublimated memories of the poet "are mirrored small in Paradise." An edifice of conjecture, I have conceded: yet it is not all conjecture to me, and I often wonder if the grave has closed over that

secret known
To us alone,

and if only at the gates of eternity it shall be unfolded by the Angel of Sacrifice, with other heroic acts of immolation made by the poet-priest.

There is a touchingly personal poem which has long been for me a source of perplexed study—"Consecration." An English critic said he would be grateful to anyone who would explain to him the first verse, which reads as follows:

The Twilight to my Star,
  Her hoary head
A Hope receding far,
  To Life re-led.

The "Twilight," "hoary head," suggested age. "My Star" just rising, was, of course, his youth. "My Star" could scarcely be "To Life re-led"; but "her hoary head to Life re-led a Hope receding far," is easily comprehensible; the comma omitted after far would give this reading. With the punctuation as it stands, "Her hoary head" is made "A Hope receding far," which in my opinion cannot be made to harmonize with the context.

My concern, however, was not with textual criticism. I ached to know who the dear "Twilight" was. But first the reader must have the full text.

The Twilight to my Star,
  Her hoary head
A Hope receding far
  To Life re-led.

Apart and poor I lay;
  My fevered frame
Slow withering away,
  When soft she came,

From comfort, to my care;
  And Pity sweet
Subdued her, kneeling there,
  To kiss my feet.

A Magdalen adored
  Her God in Thee:—
A greater love, O Lord,
  Anointed me.

I wondered vainly if "Twilight" were the Mammy whom he so loved, or perhaps his mother, or an elderly relative. And was "his fevered frame slow withering away" after the horrors of his prison life? I could not cease admiring the tenderness and humility of the act recorded in the third stanza,—the last line italicized by the poet himself:

And Pity sweet
Subdued her, kneeling there,
  To kiss my feet.

At last, just as this little book is prepared for the press, the solution comes to me from a dear young friend of the poet. While teaching at Saint Paul's School, Baltimore, in 1868, young Professor Tabb became seriously ill of typhoid fever. He was removed to the home of Charles Herman, M. D., where every care and attention was lavished on him, especially by the doctor's aged mother, whose heart overflowed with love and compassion for the Southern youth. One day when the fever was at its height, she entered the sickroom and, believing herself undetected by the patient, who seemed asleep, the venerable old lady "kneeling there"

kissed his feet, and by her act, compared to Magdalen's, has immortalized herself most sweetly in "Consecration." I think the poet raises the poem to a climax in giving it so exalted a title.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE POET'S FAILING SIGHT

An unpretentious little poem entitled "The Tree," written in 1905, in which I solicited of Father Tabb another harvest of fruit in a new book of poems, called forth the following response:

"March 3, 1905.

"Thank you, dear ———, for 'The Tree' which . . . If you knew me personally you would never so idealize a poor old 'limb.' How very much enchantment a little distance lends! . . . I am the last of my family now, my sister and the boy I love both being gone to, I hope, a happier world. All that has happened shows the goodness of God, for my loss is their gain. Remember them sometimes! . . . The older I grow, the more am I impressed by the wonderful 'Ancient Mariner,' and I should like to be present at your lecture. May all success attend it!

"Yours in Christ faithfully,

"JOHN B. TABB."

His tender and protecting love for his sister is touchingly manifest in a previous letter (January 5, 1903).

"Thank you, dear ———, for your cordial greeting, and know that you have my best wishes and blessing for the year just begun. . . . My vacation was, for the most part, spent at my sister's bedside. She is a partial paralytic, and so helpless that she cannot stand alone. The summer is always most trying for her; so, except when I went to the Springs for my eyes, every vacation has been spent with her at home. Say a prayer for her sometimes."

This intense brotherly love inspired some of his most pathetic poems. I think "Noche Triste," "The Night that Bore Me to my Dead," and "Consolation" were inscribed to her memory. Their union of heart and their perfect congeniality in regard to the spiritual and æsthetic relations of life made the great solace of his later years; and her pride in him was proportioned to the depth of her sisterly affection. The "lecture" alluded to was an illustrated reading of Coleridge's poem by my pupils.

Father Tabb refers to his failing sight in a letter of March, 1906. "My eyesight, dear ———, though better than it was, forbids me much more than my necessary work, and even this sometimes I have to postpone to 'a more convenient season.'"

It was evidently during this season that his prayerful attitude of soul toward his affliction as well as his painful balancing between hope and fear found expression in the pathetic poem,

FIAT LUX

"Give us this day our daily bread," and *light:*
For more to me, O Lord, than food is sight;
And I at noon have been
In twilight, where my fellow-men were seen
"As trees" that walked before me. E'en today
From time to time there falls upon my way
A feather of the darkness. But again
It passes; and amid the falling rain
Of tears, I lift, O Lord, mine eyes to Thee,
For lo! I *see!*

The last lines in his own hand with which the poet favored me came penciled on a postal, the three central lines so intermingled that a powerful reading glass was necessary to locate the words, "20 July, '08. Your prayers, dear ———, have not kept me from the dark, but enable me to bear it with greater patience. How very few men can say that in the detraction of daylight a great blessing too is theirs! God keep you and bring you closer to Himself prays daily, Always your friend in Xt, John B. Tabb."

In the middle of August through a friend he gave this statement to the public press: "My sight nearly gone, I remain where I am—not as the faculty would generously have me, a pensioner of the college—but paying as long as I am able, full board. It is only to keep me from seeking some asylum that the faculty consents to my having my own way—the greatest kindness it can do me."

Later in the same year a postal, probably in the hand of one of his boys, brought me words of cheer:

"Nov. 27, '08.

"Thank you, dear ———, for your very kind letter. Thank God, I am able still to say the Mass daily—a blessing I may hope to have even in the dark. My dear boys leave nothing undone for my happiness, so do not imagine me gloomy or depressed. With blessing, and asking your pious remembrance, I am always your friend in Christ,

"JOHN B. TABB."

(Signed in pencil by himself.)

Father Tabb's poems had for many years been a *sine qua non* in my poetry classes. Only the poetry of the Bible or portions of the Shakespearean drama could elicit a greater share of enthusiasm. A morning with the poet-priest was a morning of perfect delight as well as of literary culture. During this and the previous year his approaching blindness had wrought upon their sympathies; and as Thanksgiving Day neared, desiring to pay him a little tribute of gratitude and respect, they united in purchasing a basket of fruit which they expressed to him for that morning. The usual prompt answer (in an alien hand) bore them this message:

"Nov. 28, '08.

"My dear young Friends: I have never before been willing to be judged by my *fruits;* but now, through your kindness, I could ask nothing better. With blessing, believe me very gratefully yours,

"JOHN B. TABB."

But to me came a letter deprecating "so costly a gift from your pupils." The closing lines were: "Please let nothing like it ever be done again, and make the girls know how grateful I am to them."

CHAPTER XXVIII

BLINDNESS. DECLINE OF HEALTH

The affliction that had been threatening our poet from early childhood, though long delayed, had then come at last. He accepted its apparently intolerable conditions in a noble and resigned spirit. Partial helplessness was now his earthly lot, yet the soul that had loved solitude and communion with God and nature was now lifted into a mountain air of spirituality, where, though the agony of Gethsemane sweeps over the lower faculties, yet hope and love prevail, and maintain in the summit of the spirit the serene atmosphere in which the indwelling of God is known and enjoyed. His own word vouches for this in his poem "Going Blind," published in the Atlantic Monthly, through which the world first learned that its favorite poet sat in darkness.

GOING BLIND

Back to the primal gloom
    Where life began,
As to my mother's womb
    Must I a man
        Return:
Not to be born again,
    But to remain:
And in the School of Darkness learn
        What mean
    The things unseen.

And the same assurance is reiterated in "Proximity."

> If closer to the Living Light
> In *darkness* let me stay.

Memory had laid up a rich associational mass in the beauty and glory of nature, in the mental and spiritual treasures which he could still enjoy; and the friendship and love which clung to him from a multitude of admirers and friends was a pleasure and a solace; but he who had portrayed in deathless pictures the invisible glories of the saints, of the King and the Queen of Saints, took his chief delight now in closer companionship with them. His steps led him often to the Chapel, where his heart ever dwelt; and he still had the happiness of offering the daily Sacrifice of the Mass. He made his affliction indeed a diadem upon his priestly brow.

His joyous and optimistic spirit still led him as of old into the sunny fields of humor; he could even make merry with his blindness. One of his limericks refers to a current event of the year, and is entitled

HIGH FLYERS

> There once were two brothers named Wright
> Who rose in aerial flight;
> But a poet I know
> That much higher could go,
> For he soared till he got out of sight.

His health in the meantime was persistently failing; he bore it philosophically, for death had no terrors for him. Indeed, the thought of death in its various aspects seemed to have a supreme attraction for his contemplative mind. His early poems proclaim that "Death is but a tenderness"; that it is "sweet to tired mortality;" and "The Gossip," "The Tollmen," and especially "My Messmate," which opens thus:

> Why fear thee, brother Death,
> That sharest, breath by breath,
> This brimming life of mine?

make manifest the sweet relations that existed in his mind between Life and Death. But now the poems take on a deeper, more solemn note—there is a waiting, an expectancy, a keener realization of the awe-sweet change at hand; the veil is falling; his eye glances from earth to Heaven and from the coming Blessedness back to the grave already yawning, full of "sunshine" to welcome him "Dust to Dust."

"Later Poems," published posthumously, are fragrant with suggestions of death and immortality, of the resurrection, and of the glories of "Beatitude."

Yet more than one reveals to us the poet's deep and feeling sense of his suffering and inactivity. Christ heartens him in

HELPLESSNESS

In patience as in labour must thou be
A follower of Me,
Whose hands and feet, when most I wrought for thee,
Were nailed unto a tree.

Patience and hope dominate the lines "In Extremis":

Lord, as from Thy body bleeding,
Wave by wave is life receding
From these limbs of mine:
As it drifts away from me
To the everlasting sea,
Blend it, Lord, with Thine.

A personal note of solemn import is struck in the triad of stanzas of "The Vigil," "Stay for Me Here." In the song, "Fade Not Yet," we meet the truism:

'Tis the darkened hours that prove
Faith or faithlessness in love.

The poet's consciousness of the nearer approach of the pale Angel is intimated strikingly in "Death":

I passed him daily, but his eyes,
On others musing, missed me,
Till suddenly, with pale surprise,
He caught and clasped and kissed me.
Since then his long-averted glance
Is *fixed* upon my countenance.

One of his latest gems, I think, was a little allegorical poem which bore the title

IN BLINDNESS

For me her life to consecrate,
My Lady Light
Within her shadowy convent gate
Is lost to sight.

I may not greet her; but a grace—
A gleam divine—
The rapture of her hidden face
Suffuses mine.

But the chimes of earth are growing faint and the harmonies of the Eternal Kingdom are already sounding in his ears. In the light of the Divine Essence flowing into his spirit he sits with darkened sense and transmits to us a message from Heaven in

BEATITUDE

And is it well with thee?
Ay, past all dreaming, well!
For here we dwell
Where none may weep,
And Paradise is ours again to keep—
The tree of Knowledge in the midst thereof.

. . . . . .

All round us angels be
To guard the gateways, not with sword of flame,
But fragrant breathings of the holy Name,
That nevermore an after thought of sin
May enter in.

CHAPTER XXIX

DEATH OF FATHER TABB. FUNERAL EULOGY

In the fall of 1909 the health of Father Tabb suffered a sensible diminution; and in November his illness—bronchial—became serious, his physical weakness and sufferings being augmented, it was thought, by the reaction of his helpless condition on his nerves. Yet his death on the 19th came as a shock to everyone. So much seemed yet in the power of the poet-priest to do for the glory of God and for his fellow-men, though "Light, the prime work of God, to him extinct."

The last consolations of the Church had been his, yet death had not seemed so imminent. Only his physician was watching by his side that fateful night, when, at 11 o'clock, a sudden sinking spell came over him and in a few minutes all was over. Sorrow and pain and darkness had passed away forever, O Father, Poet of God,

> and the beam
> Of everlasting morning woke upon
> Thy dazzled gaze, revealing one by one
> Thy visions grown immortal in its gleam!

The funeral services were held at St. Charles College on November 21, after which the remains of the beloved poet-priest were borne to

Richmond, Va., and consigned to their last resting place in Hollywood Cemetery. The eulogy of Father Tabb's life and works was rightly spoken by one of his most gifted priest-pupils, the Reverend Daniel J. Connor, S. T. L., of St. Peter's Cathedral, Scranton, Pa. Through his gracious kindness I am enabled to place his noble estimate of the life and character of his beloved preceptor before my readers—an estimate in which heart and mind have blended their memories with a depth of appreciation and affectionate penetration rarely met with. I give it herewith:

"How powerless does death seem in a case like this to win a real victory! It was surely no violent transition by which the soul of Father Tabb passed from the temporal to the eternal. As an exiled spirit he seemed to tread the rough paths of earth, where most of us are content to find a home. It was never more than the thinnest veil that separated him from the invisible world, and hid from him the full meaning of those intimations far beyond, which he made the subjects of his meditation and his song. All nature was to him an apocalypse,—a partial revelation of the beauty that is eternal.

> 'My God has hid Himself from me
> Behind whatever else I see,'

he said, and in these words it is not only the poet that speaks, but the man as we all knew

him; and now by his death we do not feel that a life has been rudely interrupted, as in most cases involuntarily we do, but that rather it has been emancipated and intensified.

"The world of spirit, which to him was as vivid as the world of sense, is surely no strange element for that ardent soul, which used material things not as realities, but as shadows and symbols. The worshiper has but passed from the portico into the temple. The light of faith which was a lamp to him has guided him safely through the darkness, and in his own beautiful words:

> 'The beam
> Of everlasting morning wakes upon
> His dazzled gaze, revealing one by one
> His visions grown immortal in its gleam.'

"But yet Father Tabb's death is an occasion of more than ordinary sorrow. In him the literary world has lost a great genius, our Alma Mater has lost its chief ornament, and we have lost more than all—a true friend. As for the value to be attached to Father Tabb's contribution to our literature, only the most discriminating critics have as yet discovered and ungrudgingly allowed him the place he is destined to occupy among his contemporaries. The field of his art was a limited one, his muse having never aspired to anything more pretentious than the lyric, the song that is

> 'Brief to the ear, but long
> To love and memory,'

but in his own province it is doubtful if he has ever been surpassed.

"His work, however, was absolutely devoid of that garishness and boisterousness which win the quick applause. He said:

> 'The noonday never knows,
> What names immortal are.'

Like that other Catholic poet, Francis Thompson, who died a year ago, his name was the property of the few who are able to discern genius when it comes unheralded, and, as in his case, the world will no doubt be aroused to a sense of its loss only by the announcement of his death.

> ' 'Tis night alone that shows
> How star surpasseth star.'

"Nature endowed him abundantly with the gifts which make the poet. He was possessed first of all with a rare faculty of intuition, upon which, much more than upon reasoning, he depended as a guide, not only in detecting æsthetic values, but also in judging the characters and situations of every-day life. And well he might, for it was well nigh infallible. This keenness of perception enabled him to seize those more elusive phases of beauty, which are like revelations of our hidden selves, that only the true poet can make known to us. Then the exquisite

music of his verse, which is almost suggestive of some set melody, the sureness and felicity of his expression, the purity of his language, the masculinity of his thought, the utter artlessness, if I may say so, of his art—these qualities constitute his unassailable patent of nobility in the world of letters.

"But Father Tabb, as he will always linger in our memory, was essentially a worshiper. His art was not an end, but a means. Poetry was for him not a substitution for religion, but an inspiration that made religion the more necessary. Although he worshiped at a thousand shrines, it was not the god of Pantheism, but the God of faith, the God of Revelation. Child of a generation content with the worship of nature, he rose above the limitations of their poetic creed; and true and responsive as he was to the art tendencies of his day, he was not a man to rest satisfied with tendencies, but went straight for the conclusions toward which they converged.

"Like St. Augustine in a former age, his soul could never be contented with the vague mysticism in which literature is too often satisfied to rest as if there were no higher philosophy. He craved for personal and daily intercourse with his Maker and Saviour. He found in a strong, practical Christianity the fulfillment of these aspirations, which it is one of the highest charms of poetry of the past century to express; and

like another Augustine he could say to the intellects of his day, who made their religion consist of a kind of romantic but interminable and impractical quest of the Holy Grail: 'Quaerite quod quaeritis. Sed ibi non est ubi quaeritis.' His imagination could, it is true, detect God's dwelling in the light of setting suns, but his faith found a more real Presence in the light of the sanctuary lamp. His religion was not a sentiment, but a service. It found its best expression not in beautiful verse, but in his heroic Christian patience, his touching self-denial, his absolute and unreserved resignation to the will of God.

"As to that one event of his life which meant so much to him, and to which most of us here owe the opportunity of knowing Father Tabb at all, his conversion to the Catholic Church, I feel utterly at a loss to speak. No one who has not himself taken the step can tell either the cost or the gain. Cost him it did without doubt. Like so many illustrious converts of the last century, and in obedience to the same intellectual impulse, Father Tabb unhesitatingly left companionships and associations from which one of his affectionate nature and strong attachments must have found it doubly hard to sever, and sought a home in the midst of strangers—strangers not only to him, but often to his tastes and sentiments and ideas.

"Yet no one can say that he did not find what

he sought. He was content to lose his life, but we are all witnesses how abundantly he gained life by the sacrifices. If anyone ever found a home in the Church, Father Tabb certainly found one. Always a man of great spirituality, of deep religious earnestness, of strong faith and tender piety, he saw in Catholicity what his soul had longed for. Man was there treated as a supernatural being. Grace had its regular means of operation side by side with nature in a visible and imposing dispensation of Providence, that seemed to be conducted in defiance of all the laws of history, but yet was willing to have its claims judged by the strictest historical canons. The great truths of Revelation were treated, not as something transcendental from which the human reason could not trust itself to draw conclusions, but as matters on which not only the reason, but the emotions might take hold, as naturally as the child loves its mother, and as safely as a friend puts confidence in a friend. Not only was there belief in the Real Presence, but that belief used the same matter-of-fact logic which we exercise in every-day affairs. Catholics, he saw, not only defended the dogma on principle, but paid visits to the Blessed Sacrament. They not only believed in the Communion of Saints, but they believed so genuinely, so frankly, as to ask the Saints for their intercession with God, and to pray for the souls of their departed friends.

"What these Catholic devotions became to Father Tabb most of us well know, and those of us who did not know, knew their friend only partially. He was Catholic to his heart's core. As he himself expressed it to a priest only a few weeks since, who asked him the circumstances of his conversion: 'I was always a Catholic—born a Catholic. Whenever any doctrine of the Church was spoken of, I knew it was true as soon as I heard it. I would have been a member of the Church years before I was if I had learned what the Catholic doctrines were, and had known that they were taught and practiced in the Catholic Church.' When at last he did believe he believed with all his strength and all his mind; and there is many a Catholic today among those who were taught their religion at their mother's knee, for whom Christ's presence on the altar, Mary's influence and authority in Heaven as the Mother of Jesus, the duty of assisting the Souls in Purgatory, took on a new meaning after they had met this amiable man of God, this gentle yet irresistible witness to the unseen.

"What is more gratifying, however, for us to recall to day as we stand around the mortal remains of our friend is not what he got from religion, but what he gave in return. Christianity is beautiful, but it is austere. The shadow of Calvary will obstinately throw its gloom over the happiness of every Thabor. Human life is

hard to idealize. Christianity alone has succeeded in doing it, and she has done it not by escaping from the stern facts of mortal existence or forgetting them, but by recognizing and embracing them with a well-tempered spirit. 'Dispose thyself to patience rather than to consolation,' says the Following of Christ, 'and to carrying the Cross rather than to gladness'; and it is the only philosophy that has stood the test successfully. The world is full of quixotic plans for a Millenium, and they would all begin by changing conditions. The Saints, on the contrary, ended by changing conditions about them, but they began by meeting them, by bowing to them as the inscrutable dispensations of an All-Holy Will, that needs not our genius or our talent, but only our obedience and our docility, to accomplish its blessed purpose, as infallible on earth as in Heaven.

"Few men have been more deeply impressed with the reality of Divine Providence than Father Tabb, or have paid it a more sincere or a more generous homage by their lives. The presence of God was to him the most luminous of truths. The will of God was the medium through which he looked at whatever befell him, and the thought that reconciled him to all the asperities of his lot, and enabled him to bear them with a cheerfulness and quiet patience that will ever be a precious memory to the friends that witnessed them. His resignation under

that last great affliction which darkened his declining days among us was the fortitude of perfect Christian faith. 'I have seen a St. Paul in chains,' was the exclamation of Ignatius' friends after visiting him in his prison at Salamanca. It was also my sentiment a few months ago, when I came out to St. Charles after having heard of Father Tabb's total and irreparable loss of eyesight. In reply to my inquiries he answered that he was never happier in all his life. Not a doubt now remained in his mind of what God wished of him. 'And,' he added, 'if the Almighty came to me and said: "John Tabb, you can have your eyesight back by asking for it," I would not ask. I would be afraid of proving unfaithful to responsibilities of which I might not be fully aware. Now I know perfectly what is God's will, and I am resigned to it.'

"I have said that Father Tabb's religion consisted not in sentiment, but service. The same was characteristic of his friendship. He considered no sacrifice of himself too great, no demand upon his time or his means too large, no personal concern or disappointment or aspiration too trivial, no necessities of sickness too repulsive, when it was question of his friends. His loyalty resembled more the unselfishness and disinterestedness of a woman's devotion than any quality we are accustomed to find in man's love for man.

'If my grief his guerdon be,
My dark his light,
I count each loss felicity,
And bless the night,'

was the deliberate and unexaggerated expression of the affection he bestowed on those he loved.

"One word more. It is a great privilege to stand here as spokesman for Father Tabb's friends on this occasion and give utterance to these few thoughts, which are not my sentiments only, but the feelings, I am sure, of all who knew him well; and I wish to use it for the one purpose of asking those prayers, which we owe to the deceased as friend, teacher, and, above all, as the gentle influence that entered into the spring tide of our lives like a benediction from Heaven and molded our sentiments and characters more than we are aware. Father Tabb's friendship did not cease at the brink of the grave; Death but gave him a fuller opportunity of proving its steadfastness and devotion. One of the greatest consolations of his priesthood was the power it gave him of offering the Holy Sacrifice for his departed dear ones. And though his modesty would deprecate every other sentiment to which I have given expression, this one, I know, his own lips would utter were they not deprived of the power: 'Have pity on me, at least you, O my friends, for the hand of the Lord has touched me.' "

CHAPTER XXX

SUPPLEMENTARY. FATHER TABB'S SERMON ON THE ASSUMPTION

After having completed the foregoing sketch of the venerated priest-poet, Father John Bannister Tabb, I had the good fortune to discover a sermon delivered by him in Virginia on August 15, 1894, the theme being "The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin." It is the only piece of his prose writing I have ever seen in print; and its beauty of diction, its manifestation of ardent love and devotion to the Mother of God, and the clear exposition it contains of the doctrine of the Assumption, both by logic and by analogy, assure me that my readers will esteem this sermon a happy finish to the considerations they have been asked to make upon the life and poems of the saintly author.

We are indebted for this solitary specimen of his powerful and persuasive prose to the Reverend Michael J. Ahern, of Old Point Comfort, a pupil and dear friend of Father Tabb, and, like him, a son of the Old Dominion, who, after a possession of twenty years, recently sent the sermon to his friends and former fellow-students of St. Charles College, the present Reverend Editors of the Baltimore Catholic Review. It was published in the issue of August

22, 1914, where I saw it. There were some missing lines, however, and I was emboldened to write to Father Ahern for their recovery. My reward was a tasteful booklet containing the sermon printed under his own supervision, the cover bearing beneath the title and author's name Father Tabb's cherished quatrain on "The Assumption."

> Nor Bethlehem nor Nazareth
> Apart from Mary's care;
> Nor heaven itself a home for Him
> Were not His mother there.

Father Ahern writes: "I found the holograph manuscript of Father Tabb's sermon on the Assumption in one of Newman's works; I think it was 'Loss and Gain.' Father Tabb wrote the quatrain (which served him for a text) in my room at old St. Peter's Cathedral. At that time I happened to be secretary to the late Bishop Van de Vyver and had invited Father Tabb to keep up his good habit of preaching on Lady Day.

"As he was always fond of me, he gladly consented and hence this gem. I asked him for the manuscript, and much against his wont he gave it to me. At Father Ed. Mickle's Jubilee I mentioned that I had the sermon to Bishop Donohue, Msgr. Starr, Msgr. Russell and Father Shandelle, S. J., and they were of one mind that I should have it published. I did so."

JOHN BANNISTER TABB

SERMON ON THE ASSUMPTION

Delivered by Father Tabb August 15, 1894

The meaning of the feast of the Assumption is this: that the body, as well as the soul, of the Blessed Virgin has been taken up to Heaven; that what will be done for the least of God's saints in the general resurrection, has been done for her already. This, and this only, is the meaning of the mystery.

But a short time ago a meeting was held in the State of Virginia, to which even the President of the United States considered it a privilege to receive an invitation, and the object of this gathering at Fredericksburg was to honor the long-neglected grave of a woman named Mary—the mother of George Washington.

Suppose, when this project was planned, that some one had raised this objection: that to show such respect to the memory of the mother was an insult to her son; would not people—men, women and children, have scouted this idea?

"But what," the objector might urge, "did Mary Washington ever do for this people? She never led our armies nor directed our affairs. 'Twas her son that secured us our liberties, not she." "True," we should answer, "but like mother, like child, and it was to his mother, as Washington well knew, that he owed his best qualities. The influence of his father he could

hardly remember; and had not his mother directed his course, he would never have been what he was, nor have done what he did for his country. As the tree is known by the fruit, so the parent is known by the child; and in this case the training of the mother alone bore its fruit in her son."

Such is the warrant we should claim for our conduct in the recent celebration; and such is the warrant that the Church claims today in paying her homage to the Mother of God.

The analogy is close. The common run of men bear the stamp of both parents. It was less so with Washington, who hardly knew his father; and not so at all with Our Lord Jesus Christ, who on earth had no father. His humanity came from his Mother alone. "He was conceived of the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary." His virginal flesh was the fruit of a Virgin: His whole human nature was the offspring of hers. If, then, we honor the mother of Washington, shall we not, following the selfsame path, come to the honor of the Mother of God?

Consider it more closely: God, had He willed it so, might have created a new man, like Adam, from the dust of the earth. He could make the very stones of the street, as He tells us, raise up children unto Abraham. But He did not so will. As He spake by the mouth of His holy prophet, "A Virgin shall conceive and

bear a Son, and shall call His name Emmanuel." Behold, what a mother! Virginity her birthright and Motherhood her dower, and out of both a priceless possession of God as no other could possess Him! His flesh is her flesh, and *her flesh alone,* as no other child's could be that had an earthly father. Bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh; closer than wedlock is the union between them. But this fact reaches farther. The motherhood of Mary was to bring God on earth. "A Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Emmanuel —God with us."

But in His Divine nature there is no change. He is and was everywhere before the Incarnation as He was and is now. The fact, then, that He is brought nearer to us is in virtue of His humanity; and hence it is that when He is one with His Mother, then, and then only, is He made one with us.

"It behooved Him to suffer," says St. Paul, "for our salvation"; but the power to feel suffering, much less to die, was impossible even to the Almighty God, except through that nature that His Mother bestowed. Nor does Mary's claim to our reverence stop here. What she was to her Son in the order of generation she was destined to be also in the order of influence. Had she died at the time of Our Blessed Lord's birth, she had fulfilled the prophecy. The Virgin had conceived and borne a Son; Emmanuel

was with us; the Incarnation was accomplished. But it was not so to be. She was to think for Him, speak for Him, act for Him; wrap Him in swaddling clothes and lay Him in the manger; flee with Him from Herod, and bring Him back from Egypt; find Him in the Temple and return with Him to Nazareth, where for thirty years He is subject to her. Nay; she must follow Him even unto Calvary, and stand in that darkness at the foot of the Cross, that her's, the first face He had looked upon on earth, might be also the last.

Thus did our Blessed Lord make himself a debtor to the Mother He had chosen. And what shall be her recompense?

If the servant that had faithfully used the two talents was put over five cities, and he that used five talents ruled over ten, what reward shall our Blessed Lord give unto His Mother, to whom was entrusted, not the treasure of this world, but the unreserved guardianship of His own Divine Person? Shall he not do for her all and much more than He ever did for others? Yet Enoch and Elias had been bodily translated. The son of the widow, the daughter of the ruler, the servant of the centurion had been raised from the dead; and Lazarus, after four days' corruption of the grave, had been called back to life again. What, then, remains to be done for His Mother?

Even had tradition taught us nothing of this feast, would it not seem a necessity of love that where her Son's body was, hers should be also? It was sin that broke the union of body and soul that God had joined together. But in her was no sin. She had paid indeed the penalty as her Son himself had done, and why should her spotless flesh linger in the tomb? He had hastened the hour of His own Resurrection; why should He not anticipate the time of His Mother's, for whom, though He told her His hour was not come, He had wrought His first miracle? It was but to give her a privilege beforehand that all were to have in the general resurrection. Why delay it till then?

An Apostle had said to Him once upon earth: "Lord, show us the Father," and may we not think that the citizens of Heaven, adoring the Humanity at the right hand of God, might ask of Him, "Show us thy Mother, O Lord! Thy nature is twofold, and we see but one source of it. Show us the Blessed Mother from whom the other came. We will say to her, 'Hail! full of grace!' as did Gabriel; we will cry, as did Elizabeth, 'Whence is this to us!' As among women, we would call her blessed here; for to which of the angels canst thou say 'Thou art my Mother?'" And would not His own Heart have prompted the request? After His own suffering and death in this world, it seemed but the least He could do for His Father to ascend

to Him in Heaven; and now when her course is accomplished on earth, it seems but the least He could do for His Mother to take her home with Him. Has He forgotten Bethlehem? Has He forgotten Nazareth? Is Heaven itself a home for Him in the absence of His Mother? She sleeps, but her heart waketh! Shall He not shorten the time of her sleep? "Arise, my beloved, my fair one, my dove," are the words of His canticle. "Let us go hence together! The winter is past!"

And she in the joy of awakening, exclaims: "Behold, I come quickly! Yea: let us go hence! The wings of the morning are awaiting us! Let us rise as did the turtle doves I offered in Thy Childhood and flee unto Thy mountain, my God and my Son!"

DEO GRATIAS.

CHAPTER XXXI

A MEMORIAL TO THE POET-PRIEST

Almost six years have elapsed since the saintly priest-poet, Father Tabb, went to receive the "crown of justice" from the Lord whom he had so faithfully served.

His memory has not faded away; he still lives in the hearts of thousands whom he benefited. St. Charles College still breathes of his presence. In many a pulpit voices are raised in defense of the faith that are now pregnant with power because of his cultured teachings.

It is a matter of surprise, therefore, that there has been no movement as yet to create a Memorial Father Tabb Scholarship for students at St. Charles College, the institution so dear to his heart, so embalmed with his presence for thirty-five years as professor, priest and poet.

No tribute to his memory could be more grateful to Father Tabb. A poet's lovers and admirers hasten after his death to erect a statue of their favorite, or a monument or tablet enchased with his name, with a panegyric of his worth, that the eyes of men may witness to a love which extends beyond the grave—a loyalty that can cheat even death of the beauty and grace of its beloved and keep his name and

fame ever alive in the hearts of men. How beautiful is this—an honor to some of the noblest traits of human nature! But to raise a spiritual memorial to the beloved dead for the eyes of God and His angels! to place under the sheltering roof of God's temple a soul that longs "to serve Him in holiness and justice all the days of his life," a soul that shall raise daily to Him the Sacred Victim of our altars, shall spend himself for the conversion and guidance of souls in the way of truth and sanctity—what more glorious to God than an offering like this—what more precious to His Holy Church than such an ever-living memorial of her departed Levite!

It seems to me that only the suggestion is necessary to Father Tabb's friends to set the wheels of liberality in motion toward this great end. For a consummation so devoutly to be wished we rely not alone on the long procession of grateful and appreciative students whom Father Tabb so ably led through the pleasant paths of literature, not alone on his brethren of the priesthood to whom his life and writings were an honor, not alone on the hosts of friends so near and dear to his heart; with equal certainty of response we may appeal to the wide circle of his readers, who for long years have derived untold pleasure from the poems, have been uplifted, taught and made better by the heavenly influence of John Bannister Tabb.